BOOKS AND CULTURE

BY HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE

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BOOKS AND CULTURE

Books by Mr. Mabie

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Essays in Literary Interpretation
Essays on Nature and Culture
Books and Culture
Essays on Work and Culture
The Life of the Spirit
Norse Stories
William Shakespeare
Forest of Arden
Child of Nature
Work and Days

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BY HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE



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To

EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN

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Chapter I.

Material and Method.

IF the writer who ventures to say something more about books and their uses is wise, he will not begin with an apology; for he will know that, despite all that has been said and written on this engrossing theme, the interest of books is inexhaustible, and that there is always a new constituency to read them. So rich is the vitality of the great books of the world that men are never done with them; not only does each new generation read them, but it is compelled to form some judgment of them. In this way

Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, and their fellow-artists, are always coming into the open court of public opinion, and the estimate in which they are held is valuable chiefly as affording material for a judgment of the generation which forms it. An age which understands and honours creative artists must have a certain breadth of view and energy of spirit; an age which fails to recognise their significance fails to recognise the range and splendour of life, and has, therefore, a certain inferiority.

We cannot get away from the great books of the world, because they preserve and interpret the life of the world; they are inexhaustible, because, being vitally conceived, they need the commentary of that wide experience which we call history

to bring out the full meaning of the text; they are our perpetual teachers, because they are the most complete expressions, in that concrete form which we call art, of the thoughts, acts, dispositions, and passions of humanity. There is no getting to the bottom of Shakespeare, for instance, or to the end of his possibilities of enriching and interesting us, because he deals habitually with that primary substance of human life which remains substantially unchanged through all the mutations of racial, national, and personal condition, and which is always, and for all men, the object of supreme interest. Time, which is the relentless enemy of all that is partial and provisional, is the friend of Shakespeare, because it continually brings to the student of his

work illustration and confirmation of its truth. There are many things in his plays which are more intelligible and significant to us than they were to the men who heard their musical cadence on the rude Elizabethan stage, because the ripening of experience has given the prophetic thought an historical demonstration; and there are truths in these plays which will be read with clearer eyes by the men of the next century than they are now read by us.

It is this prophetic quality in the books of power which silently moves them forward with the inaudible advance of the successive files in the ranks of the generations, and which makes them contemporary with each generation. For while the mediæval frame-work upon which Dante constructed the "Divine Comedy" be-

comes obsolete, the fundamental thought of the poet about human souls and the identity of the deed and its result not only remains true to experience but has received the most impressive confirmation from subsequent history and from psychology.

It is as impossible, therefore, to get away from the books of power as from the stars; every new generation must make acquaintance with them, because they are as much a part of that order of things which forms the background of human life as nature itself. With every intelligent man or woman the question is not, "Shall I take account of them?" but "How shall I get the most and the best out of them for my enrichment and guidance?"

It is with the hope of assisting

some readers and students of books, and especially those who are at the beginning of the ardours, the delights, and the perplexities of the book-lover, that these chapters are undertaken. They assume nothing on the part of the reader but a desire to know the best that has been written; they promise nothing on the part of the writer but a frank and familiar use of experience in a pursuit which makes it possible for the individual life to learn the lessons which universal life has learned, and to piece out its limited personal experience with the experience of humanity. One who loves books, like one who loves a particular bit of a country, is always eager to make others see what he sees; that there have been other lovers of books and views before him does not put him

in an apologetic mood. There cannot be too many lovers of the best things in these pessimistic days, when to have the power of loving anything is beginning to be a great and rare gift.

The word love in this connection is significant of a very definite attitude toward books, — an attitude not uncritical, since it is love of the best only, but an attitude which implies more intimacy and receptivity than the purely critical temper makes possible; an attitude, moreover, which expects and invites something more than instruction or entertainment, — both valuable, wholesome, and necessary, and yet neither descriptive of the richest function which the book fulfils to the reader. To love a book is to invite an intimacy with it which opens the way to its heart. One of

the wisest of modern readers has said that the most important characteristic of the real critic — the man who penetrates the secret of a work of art — is the ability to admire greatly; and there is but a short step between admiration and love. And as if to emphasise the value of a quality so rare among critics, the same wise reader, who was also the greatest writer of modern times, says also that "where keen perception unites with good will and love, it gets at the heart of man and the world; nay, it may hope to reach the highest goal of all." To get at the heart of that knowledge, life, and beauty which are stored in books is surely one way of reaching the highest goal.

That goal, in Goethe's thought, was the complete development of

the individual life through thought, feeling, and action, — an aim often misunderstood, but which, seen on all sides, is certainly the very highest disclosed to the human spirit. And the method of attaining this result was the process, also often and widely misunderstood, of culture. This word carries with it the implication of natural, vital growth, but it has been confused with an artificial, mechanical process, supposed to be practised as a kind of esoteric cult by a small group of people who hold themselves apart from common human experiences and fellowships. Mr. Symonds, concerning whose representative character as a man of culture there is no difference of opinion, said that he had read with some care the newspaper accounts of his "culture," and that, so far as he

could gather, his newspaper critics held the opinion that culture is a kind of knapsack which a man straps on his back, and in which he places a vast amount of information, gathered, more or less at random, in all parts of the world. There was, of course, a touch of humour in Mr. Symonds's description of the newspaper conception of culture; but it is certainly true that culture has been regarded by a great many people either as a kind of intellectual refinement, so highly specialised as to verge on fastidiousness, or as a large accumulation of miscellaneous information.

Now, the process of culture is an unfolding and enrichment of the human spirit by conforming to the laws of its own growth; and the result is a broad, rich, free human life. Culture is never quantity, it is al-

ways quality of knowledge; it is never an extension of ourselves by additions from without, it is always enlargement of ourselves by development from within; it is never something acquired, it is always something possessed; it is never a result of accumulation, it is always a result of growth. That which characterises the man of culture is not the extent of his information, but the quality of his mind; it is not the mass of things he knows, but the sanity, the ripeness, the soundness of his nature. A man may have great knowledge and remain uncultivated; a man may have comparatively limited knowledge and be genuinely cultivated. There have been famous scholars who have remained crude, unripe, inharmonious in their intellectual life, and there have been men of

small scholarship who have found all the fruits of culture. The man of culture is he who has so absorbed what he knows that it is part of himself. His knowledge has not only enriched specific faculties, it has enriched him; his entire nature has come to ripe and sound maturity.

This personal enrichment is the very highest and finest result of intimacy with books; compared with it the instruction, information, refreshment, and entertainment which books afford are of secondary importance. The great service they render us — the greatest service that can be rendered us — is the enlargement, enrichment, and unfolding of ourselves; they nourish and develop that mysterious personality which lies behind all thought, feeling, and

action; that central force within us which feeds the specific activities through which we give out ourselves to the world, and, in giving, find and recover ourselves.

Chapter II.

Time and Place.

TO get at the heart of Shakespeare's plays, and to secure for ourselves the material and the development of culture which are contained in them, is not the work of a day or of a year; it is the work and the joy of a lifetime. There is no royal road to the harmonious unfolding of the human spirit; there is a choice of methods, but there are no "short cuts." No man can seize the fruits of culture prematurely; they are not to be had by pulling down the boughs of the tree of knowledge, so that he who runs

may pluck as he pleases. Culture is not to be had by programme, by limited courses of reading, by correspondence, or by following short prescribed lines of home study. These are all good in their degree of thoroughness of method and worth of standards, but they are impotent to impart an enrichment which is below and beyond mere acquirement. Because culture is not knowledge but wisdom, not quantity of learning but quality, not mass of information but ripeness and soundness of temper, spirit, and nature, time is an essential element in the process of securing it. A man may acquire information with great rapidity, but no man can hasten his growth. If the fruit is forced, the flavour is lost. To get into the secret of Shakespeare, therefore, one must take

time. One must grow into that secret.

This does not mean, however, that the best things to be gotten out of books are reserved for people of leisure; on the contrary, they are oftenest possessed by those whose labours are many and whose leisure is limited. One may give his whole life to the pursuit of this kind of excellence, but one does not need to give his whole time to it. Culture is cumulative; it grows steadily in the man who takes the fruitful attitude toward life and art; it is secured by the clear purpose which so utilises all the spare minutes that they practically constitute an unbroken duration of time. James Smetham, the English artist, feeling keenly the imperfections of his training, formulated a plan of study combining art, litera-

ture, and the religious life, and devoted twenty-five years to working it out. Goethe spent more than sixty years in the process of developing himself harmoniously on all sides; and few men have wasted less time than he. And yet in the case of each of these rigorous and faithful students there were other, and, for long periods, more engrossing occupations. Any one who knows men widely will recall those whose persistent utilisation of the odds and ends of time, which many people regard as of too little value to save by using, has given their minds and their lives that peculiar distinction of taste, manner, and speech which belong to genuine culture.

It is not wealth of time, but what Mr. Gladstone has aptly called "thrift of time," which brings ripe-

ness of mind within reach of the great mass of men and women. The man who has learned the value of five minutes has gone a long way toward making himself a master of life and its arts. "The thrift of time," says the English statesman, "will repay in after life with a usury of profit beyond your most sanguine dreams, and waste of it will make you dwindle alike in intellectual and moral stature beyond your darkest reckoning." And Matthew Arnold has put the same truth into words which touch the subject in hand still more closely: "The plea that this or that man has no time for culture will vanish as soon as we desire culture so much that we begin to examine seriously into our present use of time." It is no exaggeration to say that the mass of

men give to unplanned and desultory reading of books and newspapers an amount of time which, if intelligently and thoughtfully given to the best books, would secure, in the long run, the best fruits of culture.

There is no magic about this process of enriching one's self by absorbing the best books; it is simply a matter of sound habits patiently formed and persistently kept up. Making the most of one's time is the first of these habits; utilising the spare hours, the unemployed minutes, no less than those longer periods which the more fortunate enjoy. To "take time by the forelock" in this way, however, one must have his book at hand when the precious minute arrives. There must be no fumbling for the right volume; no waste of time

because one is uncertain what to take up next. The waste of opportunity which leaves so many people intellectually barren who ought to be intellectually rich, is due to neglect to decide in advance what direction one's reading shall take, and neglect to keep the book of the moment close at hand. The biographer of Lucy Larcom tells us that the aspiring girl pinned all manner of selections of prose and verse which she wished to learn at the sides of the window beside which her loom was placed; and in this way, in the intervals of work, she familiarised herself with a great deal of good literature. A certain man, now widely known, spent his boyhood on a farm, and largely educated himself. He learned the rudiments of Latin in the evening, and carried

on his study during working hours by pinning ten lines from Virgil on his plough, — a method of refreshment much superior to that which Homer furnished the ploughman in the well-known passage in the description of the shield. These are extreme cases, but they are capital illustrations of the immense power of enrichment which is inherent in fragments of time pieced together by intelligent purpose and persistent habit.

This faculty of draining all the rivulets of knowledge by the way was strikingly developed by a man of surpassing eloquence and tireless activity. He was never a methodical student in the sense of following rigidly a single line of study, but he habitually fed himself with any kind of knowledge which was at hand. If books were at his elbow,

he read them; if pictures, engravings, gems were within reach, he studied them; if nature was within walking distance, he watched nature; if men were about him, he learned the secrets of their temperaments, tastes, and skills; if he were on shipboard, he knew the dialect of the vessel in the briefest possible time; if he travelled by stage, he sat with the driver and learned all about the route, the country, the people, and the art of his companion; if he had a spare hour in a village in which there was a manufactory, he went through it with keen eyes and learned the mechanical processes used in it. "Shall I tell you the secret of the true scholar?" says Emerson. "It is this: every man I meet is my master in some point, and in that I learn of him."

The man who is bent on getting the most out of life in order that he may make his own nature rich and productive will learn to free himself largely from dependence on conditions. The power of concentration which issues from a resolute purpose, and is confirmed by habits formed to give that purpose effectiveness, is of more value than undisturbed hours and the solitude of a library; it is of more value because it takes the place of things which cannot always be at command. To learn how to treat the odds and ends of hours so that they constitute, for practical purposes, an unbroken duration of time, is to emancipate one's self from dependence on particular times, and to appropriate all time to one's use; and in like manner to accustom one's self to make use of all places, however

thronged and public, as if they were private and secluded, is to free one's self from bondage to a particular locality, or to surroundings specially chosen for the purpose. Those who have abundance of leisure to spend in their libraries are beyond the need of suggestions as to the use of time and place; but those whose culture must be secured incidentally, as it were, need not despair, — they have shining examples of successful use of limited opportunities about them. It is not only possible to make all time enrich us, but to use all space as if it were our own. To have a book in one's pocket and the power of fastening one's mind upon it to the exclusion of every other object or interest is to be independent of the library, with its unbroken quietness. It is to carry the library with

us, — not only the book, but the repose.

One bright June morning a young man, who happened to be waiting at a rural station to take a train, discovered one of the foremost of American writers, who was, all things considered, perhaps the most richly cultivated man whom the country has yet produced, sitting on the steps intent upon a book, and entirely oblivious of his surroundings. The young man's reverence for the poet and critic filled him with desire to know what book had such power of beguiling into forgetfulness one of the noblest minds of the time. He affirmed within himself that it must be a novel. He ventured to approach near enough to read the title, holding, rightly enough, that a book is not personal property, and

that his act involved no violation of privacy. He discovered that the great man was reading a Greek play with such relish and abandon that he had turned a railway station into a private library! One of the foremost of American novelists, a man of real literary insight and of genuine charm of style, says that he can write as comfortably on a trunk in a room at a hotel, waiting to be called for a train, as in his own library. There is a good deal of discipline behind such a power of concentration as that illustrated in both these cases; but it is a power which can be cultivated by any man or woman of resolution. Once acquired, the exercise of it becomes both easy and delightful. It transforms travel, waiting, and dreary surroundings into one rich opportunity. The man who

has the "Tempest" in his pocket, and can surrender himself to its spell, can afford to lose time on cars, ferries, and at out-of-the-way stations; for the world has become an extension of his library, and wherever he is, he is at home with his purpose and himself.

Chapter III.

Meditation and Imagination.

THERE is a book in the British Museum which would have, for many people, a greater value than any other single volume in the world; it is a copy of Florio's translation of Montaigne, and it bears Shakespeare's autograph on a fly-leaf. There are other books which must have had the same ownership; among them were Holinshed's "Chronicles" and North's translation of Plutarch. Shakespeare would have laid posterity under still greater obligations, if that were possible, if in some autobiographic

mood he had told us how he read these books; for never, surely, were books read with greater insight and with more complete absorption. Indeed, the fruits of this reading were so rich and ripe that the books from which their juices came seem but dry husks and shells in comparison. The reader drained the writer dry of every particle of suggestiveness, and then recreated the material in new and imperishable forms. The process of reproduction was individual, and is not to be shared by others; it was the expression of that rare and inexplicable personal energy which we call genius; but the process of absorption may be shared by all who care to submit to the discipline which it involves. It is clear that Shakespeare read in such a way as to possess what he read; he not only

remembered it, but he incorporated it into himself. No other kind of reading could have brought the East out of its grave, with its rich and languorous atmosphere steeping the senses in the charm of Cleopatra, or recalled the massive and powerfully organised life of Rome about the person of the great Cæsar. Shakespeare read his books with such insight and imagination that they became part of himself; and so far as this process is concerned, the reader of to-day can follow in his steps.

The majority of people have not learned this secret; they read for information or for refreshment; they do not read for enrichment. Feeding one's nature at all the sources of life, browsing at will on all the uplands of knowledge and thought, do

not bear the fruit of acquirement only; they put us into personal possession of the vitality, the truth, and the beauty about us. A man may know the plays of Shakespeare accurately as regards their order, form, construction, and language, and yet remain almost without knowledge of what Shakespeare was at heart, and of his significance in the history of the human soul. It is this deeper knowledge, however, which is essential for culture; for culture is such an appropriation of knowledge that it becomes a part of ourselves. It is no longer something added by the memory; it is something possessed by the soul. A pedant is formed by his memory; a man of culture is formed by the habit of meditation, and by the constant use of the imagination. An alert and curious man

goes through the world taking note of all that passes under his eyes, and collects a great mass of information, which is in no sense incorporated into his own mind, but remains a definite territory outside his own nature, which he has annexed. A man of receptive mind and heart, on the other hand, meditating on what he sees, and getting at its meaning by the divining-rod of the imagination, discovers the law behind the phenomena, the truth behind the fact, the vital force which flows through all things, and gives them their significance. The first man gains information; the second gains culture. The pedant pours out an endless succession of facts with a monotonous uniformity of emphasis, and exhausts while he instructs; the man of culture gives us a few facts,

luminous in their relation to one another, and freshens and stimulates by bringing us into contact with ideas and with life.

To get at the heart of books we must live with and in them; we must make them our constant companions; we must turn them over and over in thought, slowly penetrating their innermost meaning; and when we possess their thought we must work it into our own thought. The reading of a real book ought to be an event in one's history; it ought to enlarge the vision, deepen the base of conviction, and add to the reader whatever knowledge, insight, beauty, and power it contains. It is possible to spend years of study on what may be called the externals of the "Divine Comedy," and remain unaffected in

nature by this contact with one of the masterpieces of the spirit of man as well as of the art of literature. It is also possible to so absorb Dante's thought and so saturate one's self with the life of the poem as to add to one's individual capital of thought and experience all that the poet discerned in that deep heart of his and wrought out of that intense and tragic experience. But this permanent and personal possession can be acquired by those alone who brood over the poem and recreate it within themselves by the play of the imagination upon it. A visitor was shown into Mr. Lowell's room one evening not many years ago, and found him barricaded behind rows of open books; they covered the table and were spread out on the floor in an irregular but magic circle.

"Still studying Dante?" said the intruder into the workshop of as true a man of culture as we have known on this continent. "Yes," was the prompt reply; "always studying Dante."

A man's intellectual character is determined by what he habitually thinks about. The mind cannot always be consciously directed to definite ends; it has hours of relaxation. There are many hours in the life of the most strenuous and arduous man when the mind goes its own way and thinks its own thoughts. These times of relaxation, when the mind follows its own bent, are perhaps the most fruitful and significant periods in a rich and noble intellectual life. The real nature, the deeper instincts of the man, come out in these moments, as essential refine-

ment and genuine breeding are revealed when the man is off guard and acts and speaks instinctively. It is possible to be mentally active and intellectually poor and sterile; to drive the mind along certain courses of work, but to have no deep life of thought behind these calculated activities. The life of the mind is rich and fruitful only when thought, released from specific tasks, flies at once to great themes as its natural objects of interest and love, its natural sources of refreshment and strength. Under all our definite activities there runs a stream of meditation; and the character of that meditation determines our wealth or our poverty, our productiveness or our sterility.

This instinctive action of the mind, although largely unconscious,

is by no means irresponsible; it may be directed and controlled; it may be turned, by such control, into a Pactolian stream, enriching us while we rest and ennobling us while we play. For the mind may be trained to meditate on great themes instead of giving itself up to idle reverie; when it is released from work it may concern itself with the highest things as readily as with those which are insignificant and paltry. Whoever can command his meditations in the streets, along the country roads, on the train, in the hours of relaxation, can enrich himself for all time without effort or fatigue; for it is as easy and restful to think about great things as about small ones. A certain lover of books made this discovery years ago, and has turned it to account with great profit to him-

self. He thought he discovered in the faces of certain great writers a meditative quality full of repose and suggestive of a constant companionship with the highest themes. It seemed to him that these thinkers, who had done so much to liberate his own thought, must have dwelt habitually with noble ideas; that in every leisure hour they must have turned instinctively to those deep things which concern most closely the life of men. The vast majority of men are so absorbed in dealing with material that they appear to be untouched by the general questions of life; but these general questions are the habitual concern of the men who think. In such men the mind, released from specific tasks, turns at once and by preference to these great themes, and by quiet meditation

feeds and enriches the very soul of the thinker. And the quality of this meditation determines whether the nature shall be productive or sterile; whether a man shall be merely a logician, or a creative force in the world. Following this hint, this lover of books persistently trained himself, in his leisure hours, to think over the books he was reading; to meditate on particular passages, and, in the case of dramas and novels, to look at characters from different sides. It was not easy at first, and it was distinctively work; but it became instinctive at last, and consequently it became play. The stream of thought, once set in a given direction, flows now of its own gravitation; and reverie, instead of being idle and meaningless, has become rich and fruitful. If one subjects "The

Tempest," for instance, to this process, he soon learns it by heart; first he feels its beauty; then he gets whatever definite information there is in it; as he reflects, its constructive unity grows clear to him, and he sees its quality as a piece of art; and finally its rich and noble disclosure of the poet's conception of life grows upon him until the play belongs to him almost as much as it belonged to Shakespeare. This process of meditation habitually brought to bear on one's reading lays bare the very heart of the book in hand, and puts one in complete possession of it.

This process of meditation, if it is to bear its richest fruit, must be accompanied by a constant play of the imagination, than which there is no faculty more readily cultivated or

more constantly neglected. Some readers see only a flat surface as they read; others find the book a door into a real world, and forget that they are dealing with a book. The real readers get beyond the book, into the life which it describes. They see the island in "The Tempest;" they hear the tumult of the storm; they mingle with the little company who, on that magical stage, reflect all the passions of men and are brought under the spell of the highest powers of man's spirit. It is a significant fact that in the lives of men of genius the reading of two or three books has often provoked an immediate and striking expansion of thought and power. Samuel Johnson, a clumsy boy in his father's bookshop, searching for apples, came upon Petrarch, and was destined

henceforth to be a man of letters. John Keats, apprenticed to an apothecary, read Spenser's "Epithalamium" one golden afternoon in company with his friend, Cowden Clarke, and from that hour was a poet by the grace of God. In both cases the readers read with the imagination, or their own natures would not have kindled with so sudden a flash. The torch is passed on to those only whose hands are outstretched to receive it. To read with the imagination, one must take time to let the figures reform in his own mind; he must see them with great distinctness and realise them with great definiteness. Benjamin Franklin tells us, in that Autobiography which was one of our earliest and remains one of our most genuine pieces of writing, that when he dis-

covered his need of a larger vocabulary he took some of the tales which he found in an odd volume of the "Spectator" and turned them into verse; "and after a time, when I had pretty well forgotten the prose, turned them back again. I also sometimes jumbled my collections of hints into confusion, and after some weeks endeavoured to reduce them into the best order before I began to form the full sentences and compleat the paper." Such a patient recasting of material for the ends of verbal exactness and accuracy suggests ways in which the imagination may deal with characters and scenes in order to stimulate and foster its own activity. It is well to recall at frequent intervals the story we read in some dramatist, poet, or novelist, in order that the imagination may

set it before us again in all its rich vitality. It is well also as we read to insist on seeing the picture as well as the words. It is as easy to see the bloodless duke before the portrait of "My Last Duchess," in Browning's little masterpiece, to take in all the accessories and carry away with us a vivid and lasting impression, as it is to follow with the eye the succession of words. In this way we possess the poem, and make it serve the ends of culture.

Chapter IV.

The First Delight.

"WE were reading Plato's Apology in the Sixth Form," says Mr. Symonds in his account of his school life at Harrow. "I bought Cary's crib, and took it with me to London on an *exeat* in March. My hostess, a Mrs. Bain, who lived in Regent's Park, treated me to a comedy one evening at the Haymarket. I forget what the play was. When we returned from the play I went to bed and began to read my Cary's Plato. It so happened that I stumbled on the 'Phædrus.' I read on and on, till I reached

the end. Then I began the 'Symposium;' and the sun was shining on the shrubs outside the ground floor on which I slept before I shut the book up. I have related these unimportant details because that night was one of the most important nights of my life. . . . Here in the 'Phædrus' and the 'Symposium,' in the 'Myth of the Soul,' I discovered the revelation I had been waiting for, the consecration of a long-cherished idealism. It was just as though the voice of my own soul spoke to me through Plato. Harrow vanished into unreality. I had touched solid ground. Here was the poetry, the philosophy of my own enthusiasm, expressed with all the magic of unrivalled style." The experience recorded in these words is typical; it comes to every one who has the

capacity for the highest form of enjoyment and the highest kind of growth. It was an experience which was both emotional and spiritual; delight and expansion were involved in it; the joy of contact with something beautiful, and the sudden enlargement which comes from touch with a great nature dealing with fundamental truth. In every experience of this kind there comes an access of life, as if one had drunk at a fountain of vitality.

A thrilling chapter in the spiritual history of the race might be written by bringing together the reports of such experiences which are to be found in almost all literatures, — experiences which vary greatly in depth and significance, which have in common the unfailing interest of discovery and growth. If this col-

location of vital contacts could be expanded so as to include the history of the intellectual commerce of races, we should be able to read the story of humanity in a new and searching light. For the transmission of Greek thought and beauty to the Oriental world, the wide diffusion of Hebrew ideas of man and his life, the contact of the modern with the antique world in the Renaissance, for instance, effected changes in the spiritual constitution of man more subtle, pervasive, and radical than we are yet in a position to understand. The spiritual history of men is largely a history of discovery, — the record of those fruitful moments when we come upon new things, and our ideas are swiftly or slowly expanded to include them. That process is generally both rapid and continuous;

the discovery of this continent made an instant and striking impression on the older world, but that older world has not yet entirely adjusted itself to the changes in the social order which were to follow close upon the rising of the new world above the once mysterious line of the western horizon.

Now, this process of discovery goes on continuously in the experience of every human soul which has capacity for growth; and it is the peculiar joy of the lover of books. Literature is a continual revelation to every genuine reader; a revelation of that quality which we call art, and a revelation of that mysterious vital force which we call life. In this double disclosure literature shares with all art a function which ranges it with the greatest resources of the spirit; and

the reader who has the trained vision has the constant joy of discovery: first, of beauty and power; next, of that concrete or vital form of truth which is one with life. One who studies books is in constant peril of losing the charm of the first by permitting himself to be absorbed in the interest of the second discovery. When one has begun to see the range and veracity of literature as a disclosure of the soul and life of man, the definite literary quality sometimes becomes of secondary importance. In academic teaching the study of philology, of grammar, of construction, of literary history, has often been mistaken or substituted for the study of literature; and in private study the peculiar enrichment which comes from art simply as art is often needlessly sacrificed by exclusive at-

tention to books as documents of spiritual history.

It must not be forgotten that books become literature by virtue of a certain quality which is diffused through every true literary work, and which separates it at once and forever from all other writing. To miss this quality, therefore, is to miss the very essence of the thing with which we are in contact; to treat the inspired books as if they were uninspired. The first discovery which the real reader makes is the perception of some new and individual beauty or power; the discovery of life and truth is secondary in order of time, and depends in no small measure on the sensitiveness of the spirit to the first and obvious charm. If one wishes to study the life — not the mere structure — of an apple-

tree in bloom, he must surrender himself at the start to the bloom and fragrance; for these are not mere external phases of the growth of the tree, — they are most delicate and characteristic disclosures of its life. In like manner he who would master "As You Like It" must give himself up in the first place to its wonderful and significant beauty. For this lovely piece of literature is a revelation in its art quite as definitely as in its thought; and the first care of the reader must be to feel the deep and lasting charm contained in the play. In that charm resides something which may be transmitted, and the reception of which is always a step in culture.

To feel freshly and deeply is not only a characteristic of the artist, but also of the reader; the first finds de-

light in creation, the second finds delight in discovery: between them they divide one of the greatest joys known to men. Wagner somewhere says that the greatest joy possible to man is the putting forth of creative activity so spontaneously that the critical faculty is, for the time being, asleep. The purest joy known to the reader is a perception of the beauty and power of a work of art so fresh and instantaneous that it completely absorbs the whole nature. Analysis, criticism, and judicial appraisement come later; the first moment must be surrendered to the joy of discovery.

Heine has recorded the overpowering impression made upon him by the first glimpse of the Venus of Melos. An experience so extreme in emotional quality could come only

to a nature singularly sensitive to beauty and abnormally sensitive to physical emotion; but he who has no power of feeling intensely the power of beauty in the moment of discovery, has missed something of very high value in the process of culture. One of the signs of real culture is the power of enjoyment which goes with fresh feeling. All great art is full of this feeling; its characteristic is the new interest with which it invests the most familiar objects; and one evidence of capacity to receive culture from art is the development of this feeling. The reader who is on the way to enrich himself by contact with books cultivates the power of feeling freshly and keenly the charm of every book he reads simply as a piece of literature. One may destroy this power

by permitting analysis and criticism to become the primary mood, or one may develop it by resolutely putting analysis and criticism into the secondary place, and sedulously developing the power to enjoy for the sake of enjoyment. The reader who does not feel the immediate and obvious beauty of a poem or a play has lost the power, not only of getting the full effect of a work of art, but of getting its full significance as well. The surprise, the delight, the joy of the first discovery are not merely pleasurable; they are in the highest degree educational. They reveal the sensitiveness of the nature to those ultimate forms of beauty and power which art takes on, and its power of responding not only to what is obviously beautiful but is also profoundly true. For the harmonious and noble beauty

of "As You Like It" is not only obvious and external; it is wrought into its structure so completely that, like the blossom of the apple, it is the effluence of the life of the play. To get delight out of reading is, therefore, the first and constant care of the reader who wishes to be enriched by vital contact with the most inclusive and expressive of the arts.

Chapter V.

The Feeling for Literature.

THE importance of reading habitually the best books becomes apparent when one remembers that taste depends very largely on the standards with which we are familiar, and that the ability to enjoy the best and only the best is conditioned upon intimate acquaintance with the best. The man who is thrown into constant association with inferior work either revolts against his surroundings or suffers a disintegration of aim and standard, which perceptibly lowers the plane on which he lives. In either case the power of enjoyment

from contact with a genuine piece of creative work is sensibly diminished, and may be finally lost. The delicacy of the mind is both precious and perishable; it can be preserved only by associations which confirm and satisfy it. For this reason, among others, the best books are the only books which a man bent on culture should read; inferior books not only waste his time, but they dull the edge of his perception and diminish his capacity for delight.

This delight, born afresh of every new contact of the mind with a real book, furnishes indubitable evidence that the reader has the feeling for literature, — a possession much rarer than is commonly supposed. It is no injustice to say that the majority of those who read have no feeling for literature; their interest is awakened

or sustained not by the literary quality of a book, but by some element of brightness or novelty, or by the charm of narrative. Reading which finds its reward in these things is entirely legitimate, but it is not the kind of reading which secures culture. It adds largely to one's stock of information, and it refreshes the mind by introducing new objects of interest; but it does not minister directly to the refining and maturing of the nature. The same book may be read in entirely different ways and with entirely different results. One may, for instance, read Shakespeare's historical plays simply for the story element which runs through them, and for the interest which the skilful use of that element excites; and in such a reading there will be distinct gain for the reader. This is the way in which

a healthy boy generally reads these plays for the first time. From such a reading one will get information and refreshment; more than one English statesman has confessed that he owed his knowledge of certain periods of English history largely to Shakespeare. On the other hand, one may read these plays for the joy of the art that is in them, and for the enrichment which comes from contact with the deep and tumultuous life which throbs through them; and this is the kind of reading which produces culture, the reading which means enlargement and ripening.

The feeling for literature, like the feeling for art in general, is not only susceptible of cultivation, but very quickly responds to appeals which are made to it by noble or beautiful objects. It is essentially a feeling,

but it is a feeling which depends very largely on intelligence; it is strengthened and made sensitive and responsive by constant contact with those objects which call it out. No rules can be laid down for its development save the very simple rule to read only and always those books which are literature. It is impossible to give specific directions for the cultivation of the feeling for Nature. It is not to be gotten out of text-books of any kind; it is not to be found in botanies or geologies or works on zoölogy; it is to be gotten only out of familiarity with Nature herself. Daily fellowship with landscapes, trees, skies, birds, with an open mind and in a receptive mood, soon develops in one a kind of spiritual sense which takes cognisance of things not seen before and adds a new joy and resource to life.

In like manner the feeling for literature is quickened and nourished by intimate acquaintance with books of beauty and power. Such an intimacy makes the sense of delight more keen, preserves it against influences which tend to deaden it, and makes the taste more sure and trustworthy. A man who has long had acquaintance with the best in any department of art comes to have, almost unconsciously to himself, an instinctive power of discerning good work from bad, of recognising on the instant the sound and true method and style, and of feeling a fresh and constant delight in such work. His education comes not by didactic, but by vital methods.

The art quality in a book is as difficult to analyse as the feeling for it; not because it is intangible or indefinite, but because it is so subtly

diffused. It is difficult to analyse because it is the breath of life in the book, and life always evades us, no matter how keen and exhaustive our search may be. Most of us are so entirely out of touch with the spirit of art in this busy new world that we are not quite convinced of its reality. We know that it is decorative, and that a certain pleasure flows from it; but we are sceptical of its significance in the life of the race, of its deep necessity in the development of that life, and of its supreme educational value. And our scepticism, it must be frankly said, like most scepticism, grows out of our ignorance. True art has nothing in common with the popular conception of its nature and uses. Instead of being decorative, it is organic; when men arrive at a certain stage of ripeness and power

they express themselves through its forms as naturally as the tree puts forth its flowers. Nothing which lies within the range of human achievement is more real or inevitable. This expression is neither mechanical nor artificial; it is made under certain inflexible laws, but they are the laws of the human spirit, not the rules of a craft; they are rooted in that deeper psychology which deals with man as an organic whole and not as a bundle of separate faculties.

It was once pointed out to Tennyson that he had scrupulously conformed, in a certain poem, to a number of rules of versification and to certain principles in the use of different sound values. "Yes," answered the poet in substance, "I carefully observed all those rules and was entirely unconscious of them!" There was no

contradiction between the Laureate's practice of his craft and the technical rules which govern it. The poet's instinct kept him in harmony with those essential and vital principles of language of which the formal rules are simply didactic statements.

Art, it need hardly be said, is never artifice; intelligence and calculation enter into the work of the artist, but in the last analysis it is the free and noble expression of his own personality. It expresses what is deepest and most significant in him, and expresses it in a final rather than a provisional form. The secret of the reality and power of art lies in the fact that it is the culmination and summing up of a process of observation, experience, and feeling; it is the deposit of whatever is richest and most enduring in the life of a man or a race. It is

a finality both of experience and of thought; it contains the ultimate and the widest conception of man's nature and life, or of the meaning and reality of Nature, which an age or a race reaches. It is the supreme flowering of the genius of a race or an age. It has, therefore, the highest educational value. For the very highest products of man's life in this world are his ideas and ideals; they grow out of his highest nature; they react on his character; they are the precious deposit of all that he has thought, felt, suffered, and done in word and work, in feeling and action. The richest educational material upon which modern men are nourished are these ultimate conclusions and convictions of the Hebrew, the Greek, and the Roman. These ultimate inferences, these final interpretations of their own natures and of

the world about them, contain not only the thought of these races, but their life as well. They have, therefore, a vital quality which not only assures their own immortality, but has the power of transmission to others. These ultimate results of experience are embodied in art, and especially in literature; and that which makes them art is this very vitality. For this reason art is absolutely essential for culture; it has the power of enriching and expanding the natures which come in contact with it by transmitting to them the highest results of the life of the past, by sharing with them the ripeness and maturity of the human spirit in its universal experience.

Chapter VI.

The Books of Life.

THE books of power, as distinguished from the books of knowledge, include the original, creative, first-hand books in all literatures, and constitute, in the last analysis, a comparatively small group, with which any student can thoroughly familiarise himself. The literary impulse of the race has expressed itself in a great variety of works, of varying charm and power; but the books which are fountain-heads of vitality, ideas, and beauty, are few in number. These original and dominant creations may be called the books

of life, if one may venture to modify De Quincey's well-worn phrase. For that which is deepest in this group of masterpieces is not power, but something greater and more inclusive, of which power is but a single form of expression, — life; that quintessence of the unbroken experience and activity of the race which includes not only thought, power, beauty, and every kind of skill, but, below all these, the living soul of the living man.

If it be true, as many believe, that the fundamental process of the universe, so far as we can understand it, is not intellectual, but vital, it follows that the deepest things which men have learned have come to them not as the result of processes of thought, but as the result of the process of living. It is evident that certain defi-

nite purposes are being wrought out through physical forms, processes, and forces; science reveals clearly enough certain great lines of development. In like manner, although with very significant differences, certain deep lines of growth and expansion become more and more clear in human history. Through the bare process of living, men not only learn fundamental facts about themselves and their world, but they are evidently working out certain purposes. Of these purposes they do not, it is true, possess full knowledge; but complete knowledge is necessary neither for the demonstration of the existence of the purpose nor for those ethical and intellectual uses which that knowledge serves. The life of the race is a revelation of the nature of man, of the character of his relations with his

surroundings, and of the certain great lines of development along which the race is moving. Every leading race has its characteristic thought concerning its own nature, its relation to the world, and the character and quality of life. These various fundamental conceptions have shaped all definite thinking, and have very largely moulded race character, and, therefore, determined race destiny. The Hebrew, the Greek, and the Roman conceptions of life constitute not only the key to the diverse histories of the leaders of ancient civilisation, but also their most vital contribution to civilisation. These conceptions were not definitely thought out; they were worked out. They were the result of the contact of these different peoples with Nature, with the circumstances of their own time, and with

those universal experiences which fall to the lot of all men, and which are, in the long run, the prime sources and instruments of human education.

The interpretations of life which each of these races has left us are revelations both of race character and of life itself; they embody the highest thought, the deepest feeling, the most searching experiences, the keenest suffering, the most strenuous activity. In these interpretations are expressed and represented the inner and essential life of each race; in them the soul of the elder world survives. Now, these interpretations constitute, in their highest forms, not only the supreme art of the world, but they are also the richest educational material accessible to men. Information and discipline may be

drawn from other sources, but that culture which means the enrichment and unfolding of a man's self is largely developed by familiarity with those ultimate conclusions of man about himself which are the deposit of all that he has thought, suffered, wrought, and been, — those deep deposits of truth silently formed in the heart of the race in the long and painful working out of its life, its character, and its destiny. For these rich interpretations we must turn to art, and especially to the art of literature; and in literature we must turn especially to the small group of works which, by reason of the adequacy with which they convey and illustrate these interpretations, hold the first places, — the books of life.

The man who would get the ripest culture from books ought to read

many, but there are a few books which he must read; among them, first and foremost, are the Bible, and the works of Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe. These are the supreme books of life as distinguished from the books of knowledge and skill. They hold their places because they combine in the highest degree vitality, truth, power, and beauty. They are the central reservoirs into which the rivulets of individual experience over a vast surface have been gathered; they are the most complete revelations of what life has brought and has been to the leading races; they bring us into contact with the heart and soul of humanity. They not only convey information, and, rightly used, impart discipline, but they transmit life. There is a vitality in them which passes on into the

nature which is open to receive it. They have again and again inspired intellectual movements on a wide scale, as they are constantly recreating individual ideals and aims. Whatever view may be held of the authority of the Bible, it is agreed that its power as literature has been incalculable by reason of the depth of life which it sounds and the range of life which it compasses. There is power enough in it to revive a decaying age or give a new date and a fresh impulse to a race which has parted with its creative energy. The reappearance of the New Testament in Greek, after the long reign of the Vulgate, contributed mightily to that renewal and revival of life which we call the Reformation; while its translation into the modern languages liberated a moral and intellectual force of which

no adequate measurement can be made. In like manner, though in lesser degree, the "Iliad" and "Odyssey," the "Divine Comedy," the plays of Shakespeare, and "Faust" have set new movements in motion and have enriched and enlarged the lives of races.

With these books of life every man ought to hold the most intimate relationship; they are not to be read once and put on the upper shelves of the library among those classics which establish one's claim to good intellectual standing, but which silently gather the dust of isolation and solitude; they are to be always at hand. The barrier of language has disappeared so far as they are concerned; they are to be had in many and admirable translations; one evidence of their power is afforded by the fact

that every new age of literary development and every new literary movement feels compelled to translate them afresh. The changes of taste in English literature and the notable phases through which it has passed since the days of the Elizabethans might be traced or inferred from the successive translations of Homer, from the work of Chapman to that of Andrew Lang. One needs to read many books, to browse in many fields, to know the art of many countries; but the books of life ought to form the background of every life of thought and study. They need not, indeed they cannot, be mastered at once; but by reading in them constantly, for brief or for long intervals, one comes to know them familiarly, and almost insensibly to gain the enrichment and enlargement which they

offer. Moreover, they afford tenfold greater and more lasting delight, recreation, and variety than all the works of lesser writers. Whoever knows them in a real sense knows life, humanity, art, and himself.

Chapter VII.

From the Book to the Reader.

THE study which has found its material and its reward in Dante's "Divine Comedy" or in Goethe's "Faust" is the best possible evidence of the inexhaustible interest in the masterpieces of these two great poets. Libraries of considerable dimensions have been written in the way of commentaries upon, and expositions of, their notable works. Many of these books are, it is true, deficient in insight and possessed of very little power of interpretation or illumination; they are the products of a barren, dry-as-dust industry, which has

expended itself upon external characteristics and incidental references. Nevertheless, the very volume and mass of these secondary books witness to the fertility of the first-hand books with which they deal, and show beyond dispute that men have an insatiable desire to get at their interior meanings. If these great poems had been mere illustrations of individual skill and gift, this interest would have long ago exhausted itself. That singular and unsurpassed qualities of construction, style, and diction are present in "Faust" and the "Divine Comedy" need not be emphasised, since they both belong to the very highest class of literary production; but there is something deeper and more vital in them: there is a philosophy or interpretation of life. Each of these poems is a revelation of what man is

and of what his life means; and it is this deep truth, or set of truths, at the heart of these works which we are always striving to reach and make clear to ourselves.

In the case of neither poem did the writer content himself with an exposition of his own experience; in both cases there is an attempt to embody and put in concrete form an immense section of universal experience. Neither poem could have been written if there had not been a long antecedent history, rich in every kind and quality of human contact with the world, and of the working out of the forces which are in every human soul. These two forms of activity represent in a general way what men have learned about themselves and their surroundings; and, taken together, they constitute the material out of which interpreta-

tions and explanations of human life have been made. These explanations vary according to the genius, the environment, and the history of races but in every case they represent the very soul of race life, for they are the spiritual forms in which that life has expressed itself. Other forms of race activity, however valuable or beautiful, are lost in the passage of time, or are taken up and absorbed, and so part with their separate and individual existence; but the quintessence of experience and thought expressed in great works of art is gathered up and preserved, as Milton said, for "a life beyond life."

Now, it is upon this imperishable food which the past has stored up through the genius of great artists that later generations feed and nourish themselves. It is through inti-

mate contact with these fundamental conceptions, worked out with such infinite pain and patience, that the individual experience is broadened to include the experience of the race. This contact is the mystery as it is the source of culture. No one can explain the transmission of power from a book to a reader; but all history bears witness to the fact that such transmissions are made. Sometimes, as during what is called the Revival of Learning, the transmission is so general and so genuine that the life of an entire society is visibly quickened and enlarged; indeed, it is not too much to say that an entire civilisation feels the effect. The transmission of power, the transference of vitality, from books to individuals are so constant and common that they are matters of universal ex-

perience. Most men of any considerable culture date the successive enlargements of their intellectual lives from the reading, at successive periods, of the books of insight and power, — the books that deal with life at first-hand. There are, for instance, few men of a certain age who have read widely or deeply who do not recall with perennial enthusiasm the days when Carlyle and Emerson fell into their hands. They may have reacted radically from the didactic teaching of both writers, but they have not lost the impulse, nor have they parted with the enlargement of thought received in those first rapturous hours of discovery. There was wrought in them then changes of view, expansions of nature, a liberation of life which can never be lost. This experience is repeated so long as

the man retains the power of growth and so long as he keeps in contact with the great writers. Every such contact marks a new stage in the process of culture. This means not merely the deep satisfaction and delight which are involved in every fresh contact with a genuine work of art; it means the permanent enrichment of the reader. He has gained something more lasting than pleasure and more valuable than information: he has gained a new view of life; he has looked again into the heart of humanity; he has felt afresh the supreme interest which always attaches to any real contact with the life of the race. And all this comes to him not only because the life of the race is essentially dramatic and, therefore, of quite inexhaustible interest, but because that life is essentially a revela-

tion. A series of fundamental truths is being disclosed through the simple process of living, and whoever touches the deep life of men in the great works of art comes in contact also with these fundamental truths. Whoever reads the "Divine Comedy" and "Faust" for the first time discovers new realms of truth for himself, and gains not only the joy of discovery, but an immense addition of territory as well.

The most careless and superficial readers do not remain untouched by the books of life; they fail to understand them or get the most out of them, but they do not escape the spell which they all possess, — the power of compelling the attention and stirring the heart. Not many years ago the stories of the Russian novelists were in all hands. That

the fashion has passed is evident enough, and it is also evident that the craving for these books was largely a fashion. Nevertheless, the fashion itself was due to the real power which those stories revealed, and which constitutes their lasting contribution to the world's literature. They were touched with a profound sadness, which was exhaled like a mist by the conditions they portrayed; they were full of a sympathy born of knowledge and of sorrow; their roots were in the rich soil of the life they described. The latest of them, Count Tolstoi's "Master and Man," is one of those masterpieces which take rank at once, not by reason of their magnitude, but by reason of a certain beautiful quality which comes only to the man whose heart is pressed against the heart of his theme, and who divines what life

is in the inarticulate soul of his brother man. Such books are the rich material of culture to the man who reads them with his heart, because they add to his experience a kind of experience otherwise inaccessible to him, which quickens, refreshes, and broadens his own nature.

Chapter VIII.

By Way of Illustration.

THE peculiar quality which culture imparts is beyond the comprehension of a child, and yet it is something so definite and engaging that a child may recognise its presence and feel its attraction. One of the special pieces of good fortune which fell to my boyhood was companionship with a man whose note of distinction, while not entirely clear to me, threw a spell over me. I knew other men of greater force and of larger scholarship; but no one else gave me such an impression of balance, ripeness, and fineness of quality. I not only felt a

peculiarly searching influence flowing from one who graciously put himself on my level of intelligence, but I felt also an impulse to emulate a nature which satisfied my imagination completely. Other men of ability whose conversation I heard filled me with admiration; this man made the world larger and richer to my boyish thought. There was no didacticism on his part; there was, on the contrary, a simplicity so great that I felt entirely at home with him; but he was so thoroughly a citizen of the world that I caught a glimpse of the world in his most casual talk. I got a sense of the largeness and richness of life from him. I did not know what it was which laid such hold on my mind, but I saw later that it was the remarkable culture of the man, — a culture made possible by many fortunate con-

ditions of wealth, station, travel, and education, and expressing itself in a peculiar largeness of vision and sweetness of spirit. In this man's friendship I was for the moment lifted out of my own crudity into that vast movement and experience in which all the races have shared.

I am often reminded of this early impulse and enthusiasm, but there are occasions when its significance and value become especially clear to me. It was brought forcibly to my mind several years ago by an hour or two of talk with one who, as truly as any other American, stands as a representative man of culture; one, that is, whose large scholarship has been so completely absorbed that it has enriched the very texture of his mind, and given him the gift of sharing the experience of the race. It was on an

evening when a play of Sophocles was to be rendered by the students of a certain university in which the tradition of culture has never wholly died out, and I led the talk along the lines of the play. I was rewarded by an hour of such delight as comes only from the best kind of talk, and I felt anew the peculiar charm and power of culture. For what I got that enriched me and prepared me for real comprehension of one of the greatest works of art in all literature was not information, but atmosphere. I saw rising about me the vanished life, which the dramatist knew so well that its secrets of conviction and temperament were all open to him; in architecture, poetry, religion, politics, and manners, it was quietly rebuilded for me in such wise that my own imagination was stirred to meet the

talker half-way, and to fill in the outlines of a picture so swiftly and skilfully sketched. When I went to the play I went as a contemporary of its writer might have gone. I did not need to enter into it, for it had already entered into me. A man of scholarship could have set the period before me in a mass of facts; a man of culture alone could give me power to share, for an evening at least, its spirit and life.

These personal illustrations will be pardoned, because they bring out in the most concrete way that special quality which marks the possession of culture in the deepest sense. That quality allies it very closely with genius itself, in certain aspects of that rare and inexplicable gift. For one of the most characteristic qualities of genius is its power of divination, of sharing

alien or diverse experiences. It is this peculiar insight which puts the great dramatists in possession of the secrets of so many temperaments, the springs of so many different personalities, the atmosphere of such remote periods of time, — which, in a way, gives them power to make the dead live again; for Shakespeare can stand at the tomb of Cleopatra and evoke not the shade, but the passionate woman herself out of the dust in which she sleeps. There has been, perhaps, no more luminous example of the faculty of sharing the experience of a past age, of entering into the thought and feeling of a vanished race, than the peculiar divination and rehabilitation of certain extinct phases of emotion and thought which one finds in the pages of Walter Pater. In those pages there are, it is true,

occasional lapses from a perfectly sound method; there is at times a loss of simplicity, a cloying sweetness in the style of this accomplished writer. These are, however, the perils of a very sensitive temperament, an intense feeling for beauty, and a certain seclusion from the affairs of life. That which characterises Mr. Pater at all times is his power of putting himself amid conditions that are not only extinct, but obscure and elusive; of winding himself back, as it were, into the primitive Greek consciousness and recovering for the moment the world as the Greeks saw, or, rather, felt it. It is an easy matter to mass the facts about any given period, it is a very different and a very difficult matter to set those facts in vital relations to each other, to see them in true prospective. And the difficul-

ties are immensely increased when the period is not only remote, but deficient in definite registry of thought and feeling; when the record of what it believed and felt does not exist by itself, but must be deciphered from those works of art in which is preserved the final form of thought and feeling, and in which are gathered and merged a great mass of ideas and emotions.

This is especially true of the more subtle and elusive Greek myths, which were in no case creations of the individual imagination or of definite periods of time, but which were fed by many tributaries, very slowly taking shape out of general but shadowy impressions, widely diffused but vague ideas, deeply felt but obscure emotions. To get at the heart of one of these stories one must be able not only

to enter into the thought of the unknown poets who made their contributions to the myth, but must also be able to disentangle the threads of idea and feeling so deftly woven together, and follow each back to its shadowy beginning. To do this, one must have not only knowledge, but sympathy and imagination, — those closely related qualities which get at the soul of knowledge and make it live again; those qualities which the man of culture shares in no small measure with the man of genius. In his studies of such myths as those which gather about Dionysus and Demeter this is precisely what Mr. Pater did. He not only marked out distinctly the courses of the main streams, but he followed back the rivulets to their fountain-heads; he not only mastered the thought of an

extinct people, but, what is much more difficult, he put off his knowledge and put on their ignorance; he not only entered into their thought about the world of nature which surrounded them, but he entered into their feeling about it. Very lightly touched and charming is, for instance, his description of the habits and haunts and worship of Demeter, the current impressions of her service and place in the life of the world: —

"Demeter haunts the fields in spring, when the young lambs are dropped; she visits the barns in autumn; she takes part in mowing and binding up the corn, and is the goddess of sheaves. She presides over the pleasant, significant details of the farm, the threshing-floor, and the full granary, and stands beside the woman baking bread at the oven. With these fancies are connected certain simple rites, the half-

understood local observance and the half-believed local legend reacting capriciously on each other. They leave her a fragment of bread and a morsel of meat at the cross-roads to take on her journey; and perhaps some real Demeter carries them away, as she wanders through the country. The incidents of their yearly labour become to them acts of worship; they seek her blessing through many expressive names, and almost catch sight of her at dawn or evening, in the nooks of the fragrant fields. She lays a finger on the grass at the road-side, and some new flower comes up. All the picturesque implements of country life are hers; the poppy also, emblem of an exhaustless fertility, and full of mysterious juices for the alleviation of pain. The country-woman who puts her child to sleep in the great, cradle-like basket for winnowing the corn remembers Demeter *Kourotrophos*, the mother of corn and children alike, and makes it a little coat out of the dress worn by its father at his

initiation into her mysteries. . . . She lies on the ground out-of-doors on summer nights, and becomes wet with the dew. She grows young again every spring, yet is of great age, the wrinkled woman of the Homeric hymn, who becomes the nurse of Demophoon."

This bit of description moves with so light a foot that one forgets, as true art always makes one forget, the mass of hard and scattered materials which lie back of it, materials which would not have yielded their secret of unity and vitality save to imagination and sympathy; to knowledge which has ripened into culture. But the recovery of such a story, the reconstruction of such a figure, are not affected by description alone; one must penetrate to the heart of the myth, and master the significance of the woman transformed by idealisation

into a beneficent and much labouring goddess. We must go with Mr. Pater a step farther if we would understand how a man of culture divines the deeper experiences of an alien race: —

"Three profound ethical conceptions, three impressive sacred figures, have now defined themselves for the Greek imagination, condensed from all the traditions which have now been traced, from the hymns of the poets, from the instinctive and unformulated mysticism of primitive minds. Demeter is become the divine, sorrowing mother. Kore, the goddess of summer, is become Persephone, the goddess of death, still associated with the forms and odours of flowers and fruit, yet as one risen from the dead also, presenting one side of her ambiguous nature to men's gloomier fancies. Thirdly, there is the image of Demeter enthroned, chastened by sorrow, and somewhat advanced in age, blessing

the earth in her joy at the return of Kore. The myth has now entered upon the third phase of its life, in which it becomes the property of those more elevated spirits, who, in the decline of the Greek religion, pick and choose and modify, with perfect freedom of mind, whatever in it may seem adapted to minister to their culture. In this way the myths of the Greek religion become parts of an ideal, visible embodiments of the susceptibilities and intentions of the nobler kind of souls; and it is to this latest phase of mythological development that the highest Greek sculpture allies itself."

This illustration of the divination by which the man of culture possesses himself of a half-forgotten and obscurely recorded experience and rehabilitates and interprets it, is so complete that it makes amplification superfluous.

Chapter IX.

Personality.

"IT is undeniable," says Matthew Arnold, "that the exercise of a creative power, that a free creative activity is the highest function of man; it is proved to be so by man's finding in it his true happiness." If this be true, and the heart of man apart from all testimony affirms it, then the great books not only embody and express the genius and vital knowledge of the race which created them, but they are the products of the highest activity of man in the finest moments of his life. They represent a high felicity no less than a noble gift; they are the memo-

rials of a happiness which may have been brief, but which, while it lasted, had a touch of the divine in it; for men are never nearer divinity than in their creative impulses and moments. Homer may have been blind; but if he composed the epics which bear his name he must have known moments of purer happiness than his most fortunate contemporary; Dante missed the lesser comforts of life, but there were hours of transcendent joy in his lonely career. For the highest joy of which men taste is the full, free, and noble putting forth of the power that is in them; no moments in human experience are so thrilling as those in which a man's soul goes out from him into some adequate and beautiful form of expression. In the act of creation a man incorporates his own personality into the visible world about him, and

in a true and noble sense gives himself to his fellows. When an artist looks at his work he sees himself; he has performed the highest task of which he is capable, and fulfilled the highest purpose for which he was planned by an artist greater than himself.

The rapture of the creative mood and moment is the reward of the little group whose touch on any kind of material is imperishable. It comes when the spell of inspired work is on them, or in the moment which follows immediately on completion and before the reaction of depression — which is the heavy penalty of the artistic temperament — has set in. Balzac knew it in that frenzy of work which seized him for days together; and Thackeray knew it, as he confesses, when he had put the finishing touches on that striking scene in which Rawdon

Crawley thrashes Lord Steyne within an inch of his wicked life. The great novelist, who happened also to be a great writer, knew that the whole scene, in conception and execution, was a stroke of genius. But while this supreme rapture belongs to a chosen few, it may be shared by all those who are ready to open the imagination to its approach. It is one of the great rewards of the artist that while other kinds of joy are often pathetically short-lived, his joy, having brought forth enduring works, is, in a sense, imperishable. And it not only endures; it renews itself in kindred moments and experiences which it bestows upon those who approach it sympathetically. There are lines in the "Divine Comedy" which thrill us to-day as they must have thrilled Dante; there are passages in the

Shakespearian plays and sonnets which make a riot in the blood to-day as they doubtless set the poet's pulses beating three centuries ago. The student of literature, therefore, finds in its noblest works not only the ultimate results of race experience and the characteristic quality of race genius, but the highest activity of the greatest minds in their happiest and most expansive moments. In this commingling of the best that is in the race and the best that is in the individual lies the mystery of that double revelation which makes every work of art a disclosure not only of the nature of the man behind it, but of all men behind him. In this commingling, too, is preserved the most precious deposit of what the race has been and done, and of what the man has seen, felt, and known. In the nature of things no educational mate-

rial can be richer; none so fundamentally expansive and illuminative.

This contact with the richest personalities the world has produced is one of the deepest sources of culture; for nothing is more truly educative than association with persons of the highest intelligence and power. When a man recalls his educational experience, he finds that many of his richest opportunities were not identified with subjects or systems or apparatus, but with teachers. There is fundamental truth in Emerson's declaration that it makes very little difference what you study, but that it is in the highest degree important with whom you study. There flows from the living teacher a power which no text-book can compass or contain, — the power of liberating the imagination and setting the student free to become an origi-

nal investigator. Text-books supply methods, information, and discipline; teachers impart the breath of life by giving us inspiration and impulse. Now, the great books are different from all other books in their possession of this mysterious vital force; they are not only text-books by reason of the knowledge they contain, but they are also books of life by reason of the disclosure of personality which they make. The student of "Faust" receives from that drama not only the poet's interpretation of man's life in the world, but he is also brought under the spell of Goethe's personality, and, in a real sense, gets from his book that which his friends got from the man. This in not true of secondary books; it is true only of first-hand books. Secondary books are often products of skill, pieces of well-

wrought but entirely self-conscious craftsmanship; first-hand books are always the expression of what is deepest, most original and distinctive in the nature which produces them. In such books, therefore, we get not only the skill, the art, the knowledge; we get, above all, the man. There is added to what he has to give us of thought or form the inestimable boon of his companionship.

The reality of this element of personality and the force for culture which resides in it are clearly illustrated by a comparison of the works of Plato with those of Aristotle. Aristotle was for many centuries the first name in philosophy, and is still one of the greatest; but Aristotle, although a student of the principles of the art of literature and a critic of deep philosophical insight, was primarily a

thinker, not an artist. One goes to him for discipline, for thought, for training in a very high sense; one does not go to him for form, beauty, or personality. It is a clear, distinct, logical order of ideas, a definite system which he gives us; not a view of life, a disclosure of the nature of man, a synthesis of ideas touched with beauty, dramatically arranged and set in the atmosphere of Athenian life. For these things one goes to Plato, who is not only a thinker, but an artist of wonderful gifts, — one who so closely and beautifully relates Greek thought to Greek life that we seem not to be studying a system of philosophy, but mingling with the society of Athens in its most fascinating groups and at its most significant moments. To the student of Aristotle the personality of the writer counts for nothing; to

the student of the "Dialogues," on the other hand, the personality of Plato counts for everything. If we approach him as a thinker, it is true, we discard everything except his ideas; but if we approach him as a great writer, ideas are but part of the rich and illuminating whole which he offers us. One can imagine a man fully acquainting himself with the work of Aristotle and yet remaining almost devoid of culture; but one cannot imagine a man coming into intimate companionship with Plato and remaining untouched by his rich, representative personality.

From such a companionship something must flow besides an enlargement of ideas or a development of the power of clear thinking; there must flow also the stimulating and illuminating impulse of a fresh contact

with a great nature; there must result a certain liberation of the imagination, a certain widening of experience, a certain ripening of the mind of the student. The beauty of form, the varied and vital aspects of religious, social, and individual character, the splendour and charm of a nobly ordered art in temples, speech, manners, and dress, the constant suggestion of the deep humanism behind that art and of the freshness and reality of all its forms of expression, — these things are as much and as great a part of the "Dialogues" as the thought; and they are full of that quality which enriches and ripens the mind that comes under their influence. In these qualities of his style, quite as much as in his ideas, is to be found the real Plato, the great artist, who refused to consider philosophy as an abstract

creation of the mind, existing, so far as man is concerned, apart from the mind which formulates it, but who saw life in its totality and made thought luminous and real by disclosing it at all points against the background of the life, the nature, and the habits of the thinker. This is the method of culture as distinguished from that of scholarship; and this is also the disclosure of the personality of Plato as distinguished from his philosophical genius. Whoever studies the "Dialogues" with his heart as well as with his mind comes into personal relations with the richest mind of antiquity.

Chapter X.

Liberation through Ideas.

MATTHEW ARNOLD was in the habit of dwelling on the importance of a free movement of fresh ideas through society; the men who are in touch with such movements are certain to be productive, while those whose minds are not fed by this stimulus are likely to remain unfruitful. One of the most suggestive and beautiful facts in the spiritual history of men is the exhilaration which a great new thought brings with it; the thrilling moments in history are the moments of contact between such ideas and the minds which

are open to their approach. It is true that fresh ideas often gain acceptance slowly and against great odds in the way of organised error and of individual inertness and dulness; nevertheless, it is also true that certain great ideas rapidly clarify themselves in the thought of almost every century. They are opposed and rejected by a multitude, but they are in the air, as we say; they seem to diffuse themselves throug all fields of thought, and they are often worked out harmoniously in different departments by men who have no concert of action, but whose minds are open and sensitive to these invisible currents of light and power.

The first and the most enduring result of this movement of ideas is the enlargement of the thoughts of men about themselves and their world.

Every great new truth compels, sooner or later, a readjustment of the whole body of organised truth as men hold it. The fresh thought about the physical constitution of man bears its fruit ultimately in some fresh notion of his spiritual constitution; the new fact in geology does not spend its force until it has wrought a modification of the view of the creative method and the age of man in the world; the fresh conception of the method of evolution along material and physical lines slowly reconstructs the philosophy of mental and spiritual development. Every new thought relates itself finally to all thought, and is like the forward step which continually changes the horizon about the traveller.

The history of man is the story of the ideas he has entertained and ac-

cepted, and of his struggle to incorporate these ideas into laws, customs, institutions, and character. At the heart of every race one finds certain ideas, not always clearly seen nor often definitely formulated save by a few persons, but unconsciously held with deathless tenacity and illustrated by a vast range of action and achievement; at the heart of every great civilisation one finds a few dominant and vital conceptions which give a certain coherence and unity to a vast movement of life. Now, the books of life, as has already been said, hold their place in universal literature because they reveal and illustrate, in symbol and personality, these fundamental ideas with supreme power and felicity. The large body of literature in prose and verse which is put between the covers of the Old Testament not only

gives us an account of what the Hebrew race did in the world, but of its ideas about that world, and of the character which it formed for itself largely as the fruit of those ideas. Those ideas, it need hardly be said, not only registered a great advance on the ideas which preceded them, but remain in many respects the most fundamental ideas which the race as a whole has accepted. They lifted the men to whom they were originally revealed, or who accepted them, to a great height of spiritual and moral vision, and a race character was organised about them of the most powerful and persistent type. The modern student of the Old Testament is born into a very different atmosphere from that in which these conceptions of man and the universe were originally formed; but though they have largely

lost their novelty, they have not lost the power of enlargement and expansion which were in them at the beginning.

In his own history every man repeats, within certain limits, the history of the race; and the inexhaustible educational value of race experience lies in the fact that it so completely parallels the history of every member of the race. Childhood has the fancies and faiths of the earliest ages; youth has visions and dreams which form, generation after generation, a kind of contemporary mythology; maturity aspires after and sometimes attains the repose, the clear intelligence, the catholic outlook of the best modern type of mind and character. In some form every modern man travels the road over which his predecessors have passed, but he

no longer blazes his path; a highway has been built for him. He is spared the immense toil of formulating the ideas by which he lives, and of passing through the searching experience which is often the only approach to the greatest truths. If he has originative power, he forms ideas of his own, but they are based on a massive foundation of ideas which others have worked out for him; he passes through his own individual experience, but he inherits the results of a multitude of experiences of which nothing remains save certain final generalisations. Every intelligent man is born into possession of a world of knowledge and truth which has been explored, settled, and organised for him. To the discovery and regulation of this world every race has worked with more or less definiteness

of aim, and the total result of the incalculable labours and sufferings of men is the somewhat intangible but very real thing we call civilisation.

At the heart of civilisation, and determining its form and quality, is that group of vital ideas to which each race has contributed according to its intelligence and power, — the measure of the greatness of a race being determined by the value of its contribution to this organised spiritual life of the world. This body of ideas is the highest product of the life of men under historic conditions; it is the quintessence of whatever was best and enduring not only in their thought, but in their feeling, their instinct, their affections, their activities; and the degree in which the man of to-day is able to appropriate this rich result of the deepest life of the past is

the measure of his culture. One may be well-trained and carefully disciplined, and yet have no share in this organised life of the race; but no one can possess real culture who has not, according to his ability, entered into it by making it a part of himself. It is by contact with these great ideas that the individual mind puts itself in touch with the universal mind and indefinitely expands and enriches itself.

Culture rests on ideas rather than on knowledge; its distinctive use of knowledge is to gain material for ideas. For this reason the "Iliad" and "Odyssey" are of more importance than Thucydides and Curtius. For Homer was not only in a very important sense the historian of his race; he was, above all, the expositor of its ideas. There is involved in the very structure of the Greek epics the fun-

damental conception of life as the Greeks looked at it; their view of reverence, worship, law, obligation, subordination, personality. No one can be said to have read these poems in any real sense until he has made these ideas clear to himself; and these ideas carry with them a definite enlargement of thought. When a man has gotten a clear view of the ideas about life held by a great race, he has gone a long way towards self-education, — so rich and illuminative are these central conceptions around which the life of each race has been organised. To multiply these ideas by broad contact with the books of life is to expand one's thought so as to compass the essential thought of the entire race. And this is precisely what the man of broad culture accomplishes; he emancipates himself from

whatever is local, provincial, and temporal, by gaining the power of taking the race point of view. He is liberated by ideas, not only from his own ignorance and the limitations of his own nature, but from the partial knowledge and the prejudices of his time; and liberation by ideas, and expansion through ideas, constitute one of the great services of the books of life to those who read them with an open mind.

Chapter XI.

The Logic of Free Life.

THE ideas which form the substance or substratum of the greatest books are not primarily the products of pure thought; they have a far deeper origin, and their immense power of enlightenment and enrichment lies in the depth of their rootage in the unconscious life of the race. If it be true that the fundamental process of the physical universe and of the life of man, so far as we can understand them, is not intellectual, but vital, then it is also true that the formative ideas by which we live, and in the clear comprehension of which the greatness of intellectual and spirit-

ual life for us lies, have been borne in upon the race by living rather than by thinking. They are felt and experienced first, and formulated later. It is clear that a definite purpose is being wrought out through physical processes in the world of matter; it is equally clear to most men that moral and spiritual purposes are being worked out through the processes which constitute the conditions of our being and acting in this world. It has been the engrossing and fruitful study of science to discover the processes and comprehend the ends of the physical order; it is the highest office of art to discover and illustrate, for the most part unconsciously, the processes and results of the spiritual order by setting forth in concrete form the underlying and formative ideas of races and periods.

"The thought that makes the work of art," says Mr. John La Farge in a discussion of the art of painting of singular insight and intelligence, "the thought which in its highest expression we call genius, is not reflection or reflective thought. The thought which analyses has the same deficiencies as our eyes. It can fix only one point at a time. It is necessary for it to examine each element of consideration, and unite it to others, to make a whole. But the *logic of free life, which is the logic of art*, is like that logic of one using the eye, in which we make most wonderful combinations of momentary adaptation, by co-ordinating innumerable memories, by rejecting those that are useless or antagonistic; and all without being aware of it, so that those especially who most use the eye, as, for instance,

the painter or the hunter, are unaware of more than one single, instantaneous action." This is a very happy formulation of a fundamental principle in art; indeed, it brings before us the essential quality of art, its illustration of thought in the order not of a formal logic, but of the logic of free life. It is at this point that it is differentiated from philosophy; it is from this point that its immense spiritual significance becomes clear. In the great books fundamental ideas are set forth not in a systematic way, nor as the results of methodical teaching, but as they rise over the vast territory of actual living, and are clarified by the long-continued and many-sided experience of the race. Every book of the first order in literature of the creative kind is a final generalisation from a vast experience. It is, to

use Mr. La Farge's phrase, the co-ordination of innumerable memories, — memories shared by an innumerable company of persons, and becoming, at length and after long clarification, a kind of race memory; and this memory is so inclusive and tenacious that it holds intact the long and varied play of soil, sky, scenery, climate, faith, myth, suffering, action, historic process, through which the race has passed and by which it has been largely formed.

The ideas which underlie the great books bring with them, therefore, when we really receive them into our minds, the entire background of the life out of which they took their rise. We are not only permitted to refresh ourselves at the inexhaustible spring, but, as we drink, the entire sweep of landscape, to the remotest mountains

in whose heart its sources are hidden, encompasses us like a vast living world. It is, in other words, the totality of things which great art gives us, — not things in isolation and detachment. Mr. La Farge will pardon further quotation; he admirably states this great truth when he says that "in a work of art, executed through the body, and appealing to the mind through the senses, the entire make-up of its creator addresses the entire constitution of the man for whom it is meant." One may go further, and say of the greatest books that the whole race speaks through them to the whole man who puts himself in a receptive mood towards them. This totality of influences, conditions, and history which goes to the making of books of this order receives dramatic unity, artistic sequence,

and integral order and coherence from the personality of the writer. He gathers into himself the spiritual results of the experience of his people or his age, and through his genius for expression the vast general background of his personal life, which, as in the case of Homer, for instance, has entirely faded from view, rises once more in clear vision before us. "In any museum," says Mr. La Farge, "we can see certain great differences in things; which are so evident, so much on the surface, as almost to be our first impressions. They are the marks of the places where the works of art were born. Climate; intensity of heat and light; the nature of the earth; whether there was much or little water in proportion to land; plants, animals, surrounding beings, have helped to make these

differences, as well as manners, laws, religions, and national ideals. If you recall the more general physical impression of a gallery of Flemish paintings and of a gallery of Italian masters, you will have carried off in yourself two distinct impressions received during their lives by the men of these two races. The fact that they used their eyes more or less is only a small factor in this enormous aggregation of influences received by them and transmitted to us."

From this point of view the inexhaustible significance of a great work of art becomes clear, both as regards its definite revelation of racial and individual truth, and as regards its educational or culture quality and value. Ideas are presented not in isolation and detachment, but in their totality of origin and relationship;

they are not abstractions, general propositions, philosophical generalisations; they are living truths — truths, that is, which have become clear by long experience, and to which men stand, or have stood, in personal relations. They are ideas, in other words, which stand together, not in the order of formal logic, but of the "logic of free life." They are not torn out of their normal relations; they bring all their relationships with them. We are offered a plant in the soil, not a flower cut from its stem. Every man is rooted to the soil, touches through his senses the physical, and through his mind and heart the spiritual, order of his time; all these influences are focussed in him, and according to his capacity he gathers them into his experience, formulates and expresses them. The greater and more pro-

ductive the man, the wider his contact with and absorption of the life of his time. For the artist stands nearest, not farthest from his contemporaries. He is not, however, a mere medium in their hands, not a mere secretary or recorder of their ideas and feelings. He is separated from them in the clearness of his vision of the significance of their activities, the ends towards which they are moving, the ideas which they are working out; but, in the exact degree of his greatness, he is one with them in sympathy, experience, and comprehension. They live for him, and he lives with them; they work out ideas in the logic of free life, and he clarifies, interprets, and illustrates those ideas. The world is not saved *by* the remnant, as Matthew Arnold held; it is saved *through* the remnant. The

elect of the race, its prophets, teachers, artists, — and every great artist is also a prophet and teacher, — are its leaders, not its masters; its interpreters, not its creators. The race is dumb without its artists; but the artists would be impossible without the sustaining fellowship of the race. In the making of the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" the Greek race was in full partnership with Homer. The ideas which form the summits of human achievement are sustained by immense masses of earth; the higher they rise the vaster their bases. The richer and wider the race life, the freer and deeper the play of that vital logic which produces the formative ideas.

Chapter XII.

The Imagination.

THE Lady of Shalott, sitting in her tower, looked into her magic mirror and saw the whole world go by, — monk, maiden, priest, knight, lady, and king. In the mirror of the imagination not only the world of to-day but the entire movement of human life moves before the eye as the throngs of living men move on the streets. For the imagination is the real magician, of whose marvels all simulated magic is but a clumsy and mechanical imitation. It is the real power, of which all material powers are very inadequate symbols. Rarely

taken into account by teachers, largely ignored by educational systems and philosophies, it is the divinest of all the powers which men are able to put forth, because it is the creative power. It uses thought, but, in a way, it is greater than thought, because it builds out of thought that which thought alone is powerless to construct. It is, indeed, the essential element in great constructive thinking; for while we may have thoughts untouched by the imagination, one cannot think along high constructive lines without its constant aid. Isolated thoughts come unattended by it, but the thinking which issues in organised systems, in comprehensive interpretations of things and events, in those noble generalisations which have the splendour of the discovery of new worlds in them, in those con-

crete embodiments of idea which we call works of art, is conditioned on the use of the imagination. Plato's Dialogues were fashioned by it as truly as Homer's poems; Hegel's philosophy was created by it as definitely as Shakespeare's plays, and Newton and Kepler used it as freely as Dante or Rembrandt.

Upon the use of this supreme faculty we depend not only for creative power, but for education in the highest sense of the word; for culture is the highest result of education, and the final test of education is its power to produce culture. Goethe was in the habit of saying that sympathy is essential to all true criticism; for no man can discern the heart of a movement, of a work of art, or of a race who does not put himself into heart relations with that which he is trying

to understand. We never really possess an idea, a bit of knowledge, or a fact of experience until we get below the mind of it into the heart of it. Now, sympathy in this sense is the imagination touched with feeling; it is the imagination bringing thought and emotion into vital relation. In the process of culture, therefore, the imagination plays a great part; for culture, it cannot too often be said, is knowledge, observation, and experience incorporate into personality and become part of the very nature of the individual. The man of culture is pre-eminently a man of imagination; lacking this quality, he may become learned by force of industry, or a scholar by virtue of a trained intelligence, but the ripeness, the balance, the peculiar richness of fibre which characterise the man of culture will be

denied him. The man of culture, it is true, is not always a man of creative power; but he is never devoid of that kind of creative quality which transforms everything he receives into something personal and individual. And the more deeply one studies the work of the great artists, the more distinctly does he see the immense place which culture in the vital, as contrasted with the academic, sense held in their lives, and the great part it played in their productive activity. Dante, Goethe, Tennyson, Browning, Lowell, were men possessed in rare degree of culture of both kinds; but Shakespeare and Burns were equally men of culture. They shared in the possession of this faculty of making all they saw and knew a part of themselves. Between culture of this quality and the creative power there is

something more than complete unity; there is almost identity, for they seem to be two forms of activity of the same power rather than distinct faculties. Culture enables us to receive the world into ourselves, not in the reflection of a magic mirror, but in the depths of a living soul; to receive that world in such a way that we possess it; it ceases to be outside us and becomes part of our very nature. The creative power enables us to refashion that world and to put it forth again out of ourselves, as it was originally put forth out of the life of the divine artist. The creative process is, therefore, a double process, and culture and genius stand in indissoluble union.

The development of the imagination, upon the power of which both absorption of knowledge and creative

capacity depend, is, therefore, a matter of supreme importance. To this necessity educators will some day open their eyes, and educational systems will some day conform; meantime, it must be done mainly by individual work. Knowledge, discipline, and technical training of the best sort are accessible on every hand; but the development of the faculty which unites all these in the highest form of activity must be secured mainly by personal effort. The richest and most accessible material for this highest education is furnished by art; and the form of art within reach of every civilised man, at all times, in all places, is the book. To these masterpieces, which have been called the books of life, all men may turn with the assurance that as the supreme achievements of the imagination they have the

power of awakening, stimulating, and enriching it in the highest degree. For the genuine reader, who sees in a book what the writer has put there, repeats in a way the process through which the maker of the book passed. The man who reads the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" with his heart as well as his intelligence must measurably enter into the life which these poems describe and interpret; he must identify himself for the time with the race whose soul and historic character are revealed in epic form as in a great mirror; he must see life from the Greek point of view, and feel life as the Greek felt it. He must, in a word, go through the process by which the poems were made, as well as feel, comprehend, and enjoy their final perfection. In like manner the open-hearted and open-minded reader

of the Book of Job cannot rest content with that noble poem in the form which it now possesses; the imaginative impulse which even the casual reading of the poem liberates in him sends him behind the finished product to the life of which it was the immortal fruit; he enters into the groping thought of an age which has perished out of all other remembrance; he deals with a problem which is as old as man from the standpoint of men who have left no other record of themselves. In proportion to the depth of his feeling and the vitality of his imagination he must saturate himself with the rich life of thought, conviction, and emotion, of struggle and aspiration, out of which the greatest of the poems of nature took its rise. He must, in a word, receive into himself the living material upon which

the unknown poet worked. In such a process the imagination is evoked in full and free play; it insensibly reconstructs a life gone out of knowledge; selects, harmonises, unifies, and in a measure creates. It illuminates and unifies knowledge, divines the wide relations of thought, and discerns its place in organic connection with the world which gave it birth.

The material upon which this great power is nourished is specifically furnished by the works which it has created. As the eye is trained to discover the line of beauty by companionship with the works in which it is revealed with the greatest clearness and power, so is the imagination developed by intimacy with the books which disclose its depth, its reality, and its method. The reader of Shakespeare cannot follow the lead-

ings of his masterly imagination without feeling a liberation of his own faculty of seeing things as parts of a vast order of life. He does not gain the poet's creative power, but he is enlarged and enriched to the point where his own imagination plays directly on the material about it; he receives it into himself, and in the exact measure in which he learns the secret of absorbing what he sees, feels, and knows, becomes master and interpreter of the world of his time, and restorer of the world of other times and men. For the imagination, playing upon fact and experience, divines their meaning and puts us in possession of the truth and life that are in them. To possess this magical power is to live the whole of life and to enter into the heritage of history.

Chapter XIII.

Breadth of Life.

ONE of the prime characteristics of the man of culture is freedom from provincialism, complete deliverance from rigidity of temper, narrowness of interest, uncertainty of taste, and general unripeness. The villager, or pagan in the old sense, is always a provincial; his horizon is narrow, his outlook upon the world restricted, his knowledge of life limited. He may know a few things thoroughly; he cannot know them in true relation to one another or to the larger order of which they are part. He may know a few persons intimately; he cannot

know the representative persons of his time or of his race. The essence of provincialism is the substitution of a part for the whole; the acceptance of the local experience, knowledge, and standards as possessing the authority of the universal experience, knowledge, and standards. The local experience is entirely true in its own sphere; it becomes misleading when it is accepted as the experience of all time and all men. It is this mistake which breeds that narrowness and uncertainty of taste and opinion from which culture furnishes the only escape. A small community, isolated from other communities by the accidents of position, often comes to believe that its way of doing things is the way of the world; a small body of religious people, devoutly attentive to their own observances, often reach

the conclusion that these observances are the practice of that catholic church which includes the pious-minded of all creeds and rituals; a group of radical reformers, by passionate advocacy of a single reform, come to believe that there have been no reformers before them, and that none will be needed after them; a band of fresh and audacious young practitioners of any of the arts, by dint of insistence upon a certain manner, rapidly generate the conviction that art has no other manner.

Society is full of provincialism in art, politics, religion, and economics; and the essence of this provincialism is always the same, — the substitution of a part for the whole. Larger knowledge of the world and of history would make it perfectly clear that there has always been not only a

wide latitude, but great variation, in ritual and worship; that the political story of all the progressive nations has been one long agitation for reforms, and that no reform can ever be final; that reform must succeed reform until the end of time, — reforms being in their nature neither more nor less than those readjustments to new conditions which are involved in all social development. A wider survey of experience would make it clear that art has many manners, and that no manner is supreme and none final.

A long experience gives a man poise, balance, and steadiness; he has seen many things come and go, and he is neither paralysed by depression when society goes wrong, nor irrationally elated when it goes right. He is perfectly aware that his party

is only a means to an end, and not a piece of indestructible and infallible machinery; that the creed he accepts has passed through many changes of interpretation, and will pass through more; that the social order for which he contends, if secured, will be only another stage in the unbroken development of the organised life of men in the world. And culture is, at bottom, only an enlarged and clarified experience, — an experience so comprehensive that it puts its possessor in touch with all times and men, and gives him the opportunity of comparing his own knowledge of things, his faith and his practice, with the knowledge, faith, and practice of all the generations. This opportunity brings, to one who knows how to use it, deliverance from the ignorance or half-knowledge of provincial-

ism, from the crudity of its half-trained tastes, and from the blind passion of its rash and groundless faith in its own infallibility.

Provincialism is the soil in which philistinism grows most rapidly and widely. For as the essence of provincialism is the substitution of a part for the whole, so the essence of philistinism is the conviction that what one possesses is the best of its kind, that the kind is the highest, and that one has all he needs of it. A true philistine is not only convinced that he holds the only true and consistent position, but he is also entirely satisfied with himself. He is infallible and he is sufficient unto himself. In politics he is a blind partisan, in theology an arrogant dogmatist, in art an ignorant propagandist. What he accepts, believes, or has, is not only the

best of its kind, but nothing better can ever supersede it.

To this spirit the spirit of culture is antipodal; between the two there is inextinguishable antagonism. They can never compromise or agree upon a truce, any more than day and night can consent to dwell together. To destroy philistinism root and branch, to eradicate the ignorance which makes it possible for a man to believe that he possesses all things in their final forms, to empty a man of the stupidity and vulgarity of self-satisfaction, and to invigorate the immortal dissatisfaction of the soul with its present attainments, are the ends which culture is always seeking to accomplish. The keen lance of Matthew Arnold, flashing now in one part of the field and now in another, pierced many of the fallacies of provincialism and philistin-

ism, and mortally wounded more than one Goliath of ignorance and conceit; but the work must be done anew in every generation and in every individual. All men are conceived in the sin of ignorance and born in the iniquity of half-knowledge; and every man needs to be saved by wider knowledge and clearer vision. It is a matter of comparative indifference where one is born; it is a matter of supreme importance how one educates one's self. There is as genuine a provincialism in Paris as in the remotest frontier town; it is better dressed and better mannered, but it is not less narrow and vulgar. There is as much vulgarity in the arrogance of a czar as in that of an African chief; as much absurdity in the self-satisfaction of the man who believes that the habit and speech of the boule-

vard are the ultimate habit and speech of the race, as in that of the man who accepts the manners of the mining camp as the finalities of human intercourse. Culture is not an accident of birth, although surroundings retard or advance it; it is always a matter of individual education.

This education finds no richer material than that which is contained in literature; for the characteristic of literature, as of all the arts, is its universality of interest, its elevation of taste, its disclosure of ideas, its constant appeal to the highest in the reader by its revelation of the highest in the writer. Many of the noblest works of literature are intensely local in colour, atmosphere, material, and allusion; but in every case that which is of universal interest is touched, evoked, and expressed. The artist

makes the figure he paints stand out with the greatest distinctness by the accuracy of the details introduced and by the skill with which they are handled; but the very definiteness of the figure gives force and clearness to the revelation of the universal trait or characteristic which is made through it. Père Goriot has the ineffaceable stamp of Paris upon him, but he is for that very reason the more completely disclosed as a typical individuality. Literature abounds in illustrations of this true and artistic adjustment of the local to the universal, this disclosure of the common humanity in which all men share through the highly elaborated individuality; and this characteristic indicates one of the deepest sources of its educational power. So searching is this power that it is safe to say that no one can

know thoroughly the great books of the world and remain a provincial or a philistine; the very air of these works is fatal to narrow views, to low standards, and to self-satisfaction.

Chapter XIV.

Racial Experience.

THERE is a general agreement among men that experience is the most effective and successful of teachers; that for many men no other form of education is possible; and that those who enjoy the fullest educational opportunities miss the deeper processes of training if they fail of that wide contact with the happenings of life which we call experience. To touch the world at many points; to come into relations with many kinds of men; to think, to feel, and to act on a generous scale, — these are prime opportunities for growth. For it is

not only true, as Browning said so often and in so many kinds of speech, that a man's greatest good fortune is to have the opportunity of giving out freely and powerfully all the force that is in him, but it is also true that almost equal good fortune attends the man who has the opportunity of receiving truth and instruction through a wide and rich experience.

But individual experience, however inclusive and deep, is necessarily limited, and the life of the greatest man would be confined within narrow boundaries if he were shut within the circle of his own individual contact with things and persons. If Shakespeare had written of those things only of which he had personal knowledge, of those experiences in which he had personally shared, his contribution to literature would be deeply interesting,

but it would not possess that quality of universality which makes it the property of the race. In Shakespeare there was not only knowledge of man, but knowledge of men as well. His greatness rests not only on his own commanding personality, but on his magical power of laying other personalities under tribute for the enlargement of his view of things and the enrichment of his portraiture of humanity. A man learns much from his own contacts with his time and his race, but one of the most important gains he makes is the development of the faculty of appropriating the results of the contacts of other men with other times and races; and one of the finer qualities of rich experience is the quickening of the imagination to divine that which is hidden in the experience of other races and ages.

The man of culture must not only live deeply and intelligently in his own experience, rationalising and utilising it as he passes through it; he must also break away from its limitations and escape its tendency to substitute a part of life, distinctly seen, for the whole of life, vaguely discerned. The great writer, for instance, must first make his own nature rich in its development and powerful in harmony of aim and force, and he must also make this nature sensitive, sympathetic, and clairvoyant in its relations with the natures of other men. To become self-centred, and yet to be able to pass entirely out of one's self into the thoughts, emotions, impulses, and sufferings of others, involves a harmonising of opposing tendencies which is difficult of attainment.

It is precisely this poise which men of the highest productive power secure; for it is this nice adjustment of the individual discovery of truth to the general discovery of truth which gives a man of imaginative faculty range, power, and sanity of view. To see, feel, think, and act strongly and intelligently in our own individual world gives us first-hand relations to that world, and first-hand knowledge of it; to pass beyond the limits of this small sphere, which we touch with our own hands, into the larger spheres which other men touch, not only widens our knowledge but vastly increases our power. It is like exchanging the power of a small stream for the general power which plays through Nature. One of the measures of greatness is furnished by this ability to pass through individual into

national or racial experience; for a man's spiritual dimensions, as revealed through any form of art, are determined by his power of discerning essential qualities and experiences in the greatest number of people. The four writers who hold the highest places in literature justify their claims by their universality; that is to say, by the range of their knowledge of life as that knowledge lies revealed in the experience of the race.

It is the fortune of a very small group of men in any age to possess the power of divining, by the gift of genius, the world which lies, nebulous and shadowy, in the lives of men about them, or in the lives of men of other times; in the nature of things, the clairvoyant vision of poets like Tennyson, Browning, and Hugo, of novelists like Thackeray, Balzac,

and Tolstoi, is not at the command of all men; and yet all men may share in it and be enlarged by it. This is one of the most important services which literature renders to its lover: it makes him a companion of the most interesting personalities in their most significant moments; it enables him to break the bars of individual experience and escape into the wider and richer life of the race. Within the compass of a very small room, on a very few shelves, the real story of man in this world may be collected in the books of life in which it is written; and the solitary reader, whose personal contacts with men and events are few and lacking in distinction and interest, may enter, through his books, into the most thrilling life of the race in some of its most significant moments.

No man can read "In Memoriam" or "The Ring and the Book" without passing beyond the boundaries of his individual experience into experiences which broaden and quicken his own spirit; and no one can become familiar with the novels of Tourguéneff or Tolstoi without touching life at new points and passing through emotions which would never have been stirred in him by the happenings of his own life. Such a story as "Anna Karénina" leaves no reader of imagination or heart entirely unchanged; its elemental moral and artistic force strikes into every receptive mind and leaves there a knowledge of life not possessed before. The work of the Russian novelists has been, indeed, a new reading in the book of experience; it has made a notable addition to the sum total of

humanity's knowledge of itself. In the pages of Gogol, Dostoievski, Tourguéneff, and Tolstoi, the majority of readers have found a world absolutely new to them; and in reading those pages, so penetrated with the dramatic spirit, they have come into the possession of a knowledge of life not formal and didactic, but deep, vital, and racial in its range and significance. To possess the knowledge of an experience at once so remote and so rich in disclosure of character, so charged with tragic interest, is to push back the horizons of our own experience, to secure a real contribution to our own enrichment and development. Whoever carries that process far enough brings into his individual experience much of the richness and splendour of the experience of the race.

Chapter XV.

Freshness of Feeling.

THE primary charm of art resides in the freshness of feeling which it reveals and conveys. An art which discloses fatigue, weariness, exhaustion of emotion, deadening of interest, has parted with its magical spell; for vitality, emotion, passionate interest in the experiences of life, devout acceptance of the facts of life, are the prime characteristics of art in those moments when its veracity and power are at the highest point. A great work of art may be tragic in the view of life which it presents, but it must show no sign of the succumbing of the spirit to the

appalling facts with which it deals; even in those cases in which, as in the tragedy of "King Lear," blind fate seems relentlessly sovereign over human affairs, the artist must disclose in his attitude and method a sustained energy of spirit. Nothing shows so clearly a decline in creative force as a loss of interest on the part of the artist in the subject or material with which he deals.

That fresh bloom which lies on the very face of poetry, and in which not only its obvious but its enduring charm resides, is the expression of a feeling for nature, for life, and for the happenings which make up the common lot, which keeps its earliest receptivity and responsiveness. When a man ceases to care deeply for things, he ceases to represent or interpret them with insight and power. The preservation

of feeling is, therefore, essential in all artistic work; and when it is lost, the artist becomes an echo or an imitation of his nobler self and work. It is the beautiful quality of the true art instinct that it constantly sees and feels the familiar world with a kind of childlike directness and delight. That which has become commonplace to most men is as full of charm and novelty to the artist as if it had just been created. He sees it with fresh eyes and feels it with a fresh heart. To such a spirit nothing becomes stale and hackneyed; everything remains new, fresh, and significant. It has often been said that if it were not for the children the world would lose the faith, the enthusiasm, the delight which constantly renew its spirit and reinforce its courage. A world grown old in feeling would be an exhausted

world, incapable of production along spiritual or artistic lines. Now, the artist is always a child in the eagerness of his spirit and the freshness of his feeling; he retains the magical power of seeing things habitually, and still seeing them freshly. Mr. Lowell was walking with a friend along a country road when they came upon a large building which bore the inscription, "Home for Incurable Children." "They 'll take me there some day," was the half-humorous comment of a sensitive man, to whom life brought great sorrows, but who retained to the very end a youthful buoyancy, courage, and faculty of finding delight in common things.

It is a significant fact that the greatest men and women never lose the qualities which are commonly associated with youth, — freshness of feeling,

zest for work, joy in life. Goethe at eighty-four studied the problems of life with the same deep interest which he had felt in them at thirty or forty; Tennyson's imagination showed some signs of waning power in extreme old age, but the magic of feeling was still fresh in his heart; Dr. Holmes carried his blithe spirit, his gayety and spontaneity of wit, to the last year of his life; and Mr. Gladstone at eighty-six was one of the most eager and aspiring men of his time. Genius seems to be allied to immortal youth; and in this alliance resides a large part of its power. For the man of genius does not demonstrate his possession of that rare and elusive gift by seeing things which have never been seen before, but by seeing with fresh interest what men have seen so often that they have ceased to regard it. Nov-

elty is rarely characteristic of great works of art; on the contrary, the facts of life which they set before us are familiar, and the thoughts they convey by direct statement or by dramatic illustration have always been haunting our minds. The secret of the artist resides in the unwearied vitality which brings him to such close quarters with life, and endows him with directness of sight and freshness of feeling. Daisies have starred fields in Scotland since men began to plough and reap, but Burns saw them as if they had sprung from the ground for the first time; forgotten generations have seen the lark rise and heard the cuckoo call in England, but to Wordsworth the song from the upper sky and the notes from the thicket on the hill were full of the music of the first morning. Shakespeare dealt with old

stories and constantly touched upon the most familiar things; but with what new interest he invests both theme and illustration! One may spend a lifetime in a country village, surrounded by people who are apparently entirely uninteresting; but if one has the eye of a novelist for the facts of life, the power to divine character, the gift to catch the turn of speech, the trick of voice, the peculiarity of manner, what resources, discoveries, and diversion are at hand! The artist never has to search for material; it is always at hand. That it is old, trite, stale to others, is of no consequence; it is always fresh and significant to him.

This freshness of feeling is not in any way dependent on the character of the materials upon which it plays; it is not an irresponsible tempera-

mental quality which seeks the joyful or comic facts of life and ignores its sad and tragic aspects. The zest of spirit which one finds in Shakespeare, for instance, is not a blind optimism thoughtlessly escaping from the shadows into the sunshine. On the contrary, it is drawn by a deep instinct to study the most perplexing problems of character, and to drop its plummets into the blackest abysses of experience. Literature deals habitually with the most sombre side of the human lot, and finds its richest material in those awful happenings which invest the history of every race with such pathetic interest; and yet literature, in its great moments, overflows with vitality, zest of spirit, freshness of spirit! There is no contradiction in all this; for the vitality which pervades great art is not dependent upon

external conditions; it has its source in the soul of the artist. It is the immortal quality in the human spirit playing like sunshine on the hardest and most tragic facts of experience. It often suggests no explanation of these facts; it is content to present them with relentless veracity; but even when it offers no solution of the tragic problem, the tireless interest which it feels, the force with which it illustrates and describes, the power of moral organisation and interpretation which it reveals, carry with them the conviction that the spirit of man, however baffled and beaten, is superior to all the accidents of fortune, and indestructible even within the circle of the blackest fate. As Œdipus, old, blind, and smitten, vanishes from our sight, we think of him no longer as a great figure blasted by adverse fate, but as a

great soul smitten and scourged, and yet still invested with the dignity of immortality. The dramatist, even when he throws no light on the ultimate solution of the problem with which he is dealing, feels so deeply and freshly, and discloses such sustained strength, that the vitality with which the facts are exhibited and the question stated affirms its superiority over all the adversities and catastrophes of fortune.

This freshness of feeling, which is the gift of men and women of genius, must be possessed in some measure by all who long to get the most out of life and to develop their own inner resources. To retain zest in work and delight in life we must keep freshness of feeling. Its presence lends unfailing charm to its possessor; its loss involves loss of the deepest per-

sonal charm. It is essential in all genuine culture, because it sustains that interest in events, experience, and opportunity upon which growth is largely conditioned; and there is no more effective means of preserving and developing it than intimacy with those who have invested all life with its charm. The great books are reservoirs of this vitality. When our own interest begins to die and the world turns gray and old in our sight, we have only to open Homer, Shakespeare, Browning, and the flowers bloom again and the skies are blue; and the experiences of life, however tragic, are matched by a vitality which is sovereign over them all.

Chapter XVI.

Liberation from One's Time.

THE law of opposites under which men live is very strikingly brought out in the endeavour to secure a sound and intelligent adjustment to one's time, — a relation intimate and vital, and at the same time deliberately and judicially assumed. To be detached in thought, feeling, or action, from the age in which one lives, is to cut the ties that bind the individual to society, and through which he is very largely nourished and educated. To live deeply and really through every form of expression and in every

relationship is so essential to the complete unfolding of the personality that he who falls below the full measure of his capacity for experience and for expression falls below the full measure of his possible growth. Life is not, as some men of detached moods or purely critical temper have assumed, a spectacle of which the secret can be mastered without sharing in the movement; it is rather a drama, the splendour of whose expression and the depth of whose meaning are revealed to those alone who share in the action. To stand aside from the vital movement and study life in a purely critical spirit is to miss the deeper education which is involved in the vital process, and to lose the fundamental revelation which is slowly and painfully disclosed to those

whose minds and hearts are open to receive it. No one can understand love who has not loved and been loved; no one can comprehend sorrow who has not had the companionship of sorrow. The experiment has been made in many forms, but no one has yet been nourished by the fruit of the tree of knowledge who has eaten of that fruit alone. In the art of living, as in all the arts which illustrate and enrich living, the amateur and the dilettante have no real position; they never attain to that mastery of knowledge or of execution which alone give reality to a man's life or work. Mastery in any art comes to those only who give themselves without reservation or stint to their task; mastery in the supreme art of living is within reach of those only

who live completely in every faculty and relation.

To stand in the closest and most vital relation to one's time is, therefore, the first condition of comprehending one's age and getting from it what it has to give. But while a man must be in and with his time in the most vital sense, he must not be wholly of it. To get the vital enrichment which flows from identification with one's age, and at the same time to get the detachment which enables one to see his time in true relation to all time, is one of the problems which requires the highest wisdom for its solution. It is easy to become entirely absorbed in one's age, or it is easy to detach one's self from it, and study it in a cold and critical temper; but to get its warmth and vitality and escape its narrowing and limiting in-

fluence is so difficult that comparatively few men succeed in striking the balance between two divergent tendencies.

A man gets power and knowledge from his time in the degree in which he suffers it to enlarge and vitalise him; he loses power and knowledge in the degree in which he suffers it to limit his vision and confine his interests. The Time Spirit is the greatest of our teachers so long as it is the interpreter of the Eternal Spirit; it is the most fallible and misleading of teachers when it attempts to speak for itself. The visible and material things by which we are surrounded are of immense helpfulness so long as they symbolise invisible and spiritual things; they become stones of stumbling and rocks of offence when they are detached from the spiritual order

and set apart in an order of their own. The age in which we live affords a concrete illustration of the vital processes in society and means of contact with that society, but it is comprehensible and educative in the exact degree in which we understand its relation to other times. The impression which the day makes upon us needs to be tested by the impression which we receive from the year; the judgment of a decade must be corrected by the judgment of the century. The present hour is subtly illusive; it fills the whole stage, to the exclusion of the past and the present; it appears to stand alone, detached from all that went before or is to follow; it seems to be the historic moment, the one reality amid fleeting shadows. As a matter of fact, it is a logical product of the past, bound to it by ties so elu-

sive that we cannot trace them, and so numerous and tenacious that we cannot sever them; it is but a fragment of a whole immeasurably greater than itself; its character is so completely determined by the past that the most radical changes we can make in it are essentially superficial; for it is the future, not the present, which is in our hands. To get even a glimpse of the character and meaning of our own time, we must, therefore, see it in relation to all time; to master it in any sense we must set it in its true historical relations. That which to the uneducated mind seems portentous is lightly regarded by the mind which sees the apparently isolated event in a true historic perspective; while the occurrence or condition which is barely noticed by the untrained, seen in the same perspective,

becomes tragic in its prophecy of change and suffering. History is full of corrections of the mistaken judgments of the hour; and from the hate or adoration of contemporaries, the wise man turns to the clear-sighted and inexorable judgment of posterity. In the far-seeing vision of a trained intelligence the hour is never detached from the day, nor the day from the year; and the year is always held in its place in the century.

Now, the man of culture has pre-eminently the gift of living deeply in his own age, and at the same time of seeing it in relation to all ages. It has no illusion for him; it cannot deceive him with its passionate acceptance or its equally passionate rejection. He sees the crown shining above the cross; he hears the long thunders of applause breaking in upon execrations

which they will finally silence; he foresees the harvest in the seed that lies barely covered on the surface; and, afar off, his ear notes the final crash of that which at the moment seems to carry with it the assurance of eternal duration. Such a man secures the vitality of his time, but he escapes its limitation of vision by seeing it clearly and seeing it whole; he corrects the teaching of the time spirit by constant reference to the teaching of the Eternal Spirit imparted in the long training and the wide revelation of history. The day is beautiful and significant, or ominous and tragic, to him as it discloses its relation to the good or the evil of the years that are gone. And these vital associations, these deep historic connections, are brought to light with peculiar clearness in literature. Beyond all other

means of enfranchisement, the book liberates a man from imprisonment within the narrow limits of his own time; it makes him free of all times. He lives in all periods, under all forms of government, in all social conditions; the mind of antiquity, of mediævalism, of the Renaissance, is as open to him as the mind of his own day, and so he is able to look upon human life in its entirety.

Chapter XVII.

Liberation from One's Place.

THE instinct which drives men to travel is at bottom identical with that which fills men with passionate desire to know what is in life. Time and strength are often wasted in restless change from place to place; but real wandering, however aimless in mood, is always education. To know one's neighbours and to be on good terms with the community in which one lives are the beginning of sound relations to the world at large; but one never knows his village in any real sense until he knows the world. The distant hills which seem

to be always calling the imaginative boy away from the familiar fields and hearth do not conspire against his peace, however much they may conspire against his comfort; they help him to the fulfilment of his destiny by suggesting to his imagination the deeper experience, the richer growth, the higher tasks which await him in the world beyond the horizon. Man is a wanderer by the law of his life; and if he never leaves his home in which he is born, he never builds a home of his own.

It is the law of life that a child should leave his father and separate himself from his inherited surroundings, in order that by self-unfolding and self-realisation he may substitute a conscious for an unconscious, a moral for an instinctive relation. The instinct of the myth-makers was

sound when it led them to attach such importance to the wandering and the return; the separation effected in order that individuality and character might be realised through isolation and experience, the return voluntarily made through clear recognition of the soundness of the primitive relations, the beauty of the service of the older and wiser to the younger and the more ignorant. We are born into relations which we accept as normal and inevitable; we break away from them in order that by detachment we may see them objectively and from a distance, and that we may come to self-consciousness; we resume these relations of deliberate purpose and with clear perception of their moral significance. So the boy, grown to manhood, returns to his home from the world in which

he has tested himself and seen for the first time, with clear eyes, the depth and beauty of its service in the spiritual order; so the man who has revolted from the barren and shallow dogmatic statement of a spiritual truth returns, in riper years and with a deeper insight, to the truth which is no longer matter of inherited belief but of vital need and perception.

The ripe, mature, full mind not only escapes the limitation of the time in which it finds itself; it also escapes from the limitations of the place in which it happens to be. A man of deep culture cannot be a provincial; he must be a citizen of the world. The man of provincial tastes and ideas owns the acres; the man of culture commands the landscape. He knows the world beyond the hills; he sees the great movement of life

from which the village seems almost shut out; he shares those inclusive experiences which come to each age and give each age a character of its own. He is in fellowship and sympathy with the smaller community at his doors, but he belongs also to that greater community which is coterminous with humanity itself. He is not disloyal to his immediate surroundings when he leaves them for exploration, travel, and discovery; he is fulfilling that law of life which conditions true valuation of that into which one is born upon clear perception of that which one must acquire for himself.

The wanderings of individuals and races, which form so large a part of the substance of history, are witnesses of that craving for deeper experience and wider knowledge which is one of

the springs of human progress. The American cares for Europe not for its more skilful and elaborate ministration to his comfort; he is drawn towards it through the appeal of its rich historic life to his imagination and through the diversity and variety of its social and racial phenomena. And in like manner the European seeks the East, not simply as a matter of idle curiosity, but because he finds in the East conditions which are set in such sharp contrast with those with which he is familiar. The instinct for expansion which gives human history its meaning and interest is constantly urging the man of sensitive mind to secure by observation that which he cannot get by experience.

To secure the most complete development one must live in one's time and yet live above it, and one

must also live in one's home and yet live, at the same time, in the world. The life which is bounded in knowledge, interest, and activity by the invisible but real and limiting walls of a small community is often definite in aim, effective in action, and upright in intention; but it cannot be rich, varied, generous, and stimulating. The life, on the other hand, which is entirely detached from local associations and tasks is often interesting, liberalising, and catholic in spirit; but it cannot be original or productive. A sound life — balanced, poised, and intelligently directed — must stand strongly in both local and universal relations; it must have the vitality and warmth of the first, and the breadth and range of the second.

This liberation from provincialism is not only one of the signs of

culture, but it is also one of its finest results; it registers a high degree of advancement. For the man who has passed beyond the prejudices, misconceptions, and narrowness of provincialism has gone far on the road to self-education. He has made as marked an advance on the position of the great mass of his contemporaries as that position is an advance on the earlier stages of barbarism. The barbarian lives only in his tribe; the civilised man, in the exact degree in which he is civilised, lives with humanity. Books are among the richest resources against narrowing local influences; they are the ripest expositions of the world-spirit. To know the typical books of the race is to be in touch with those elements of thought and experience which are shared by men of all countries. Without a

knowledge of these books a man never really gets at the life of localities which are foreign to him; never really sees those historic places about which the traditions of civilisation have gathered. Travel is robbed of half its educational value unless one carries with him a knowledge of that which he looks at for the first time with his own eyes. No American sees England unless he carries England in his memory and imagination. Westminster Abbey is devoid of spiritual significance to the man who is ignorant of the life out of which it grew, and of the history which is written in its architecture and its memorials. The emancipation from the limitations of locality is greatly aided by travel, but it is accomplished only by intimate knowledge of the greater books.

Chapter XVIII.

The Unconscious Element.

WHILE it is true that the greatest books betray the most intimate acquaintance with the time in which they are written, and disclose the impress of that time in thought, structure, and style, it is also true that such books are so essentially independent of contemporary forms and moods that they largely escape the vicissitudes which attend those forms and moods. The element of enduring interest in them outweighs the accidents of local speech or provincial knowledge, as the force and genius of Cæsar survive the armor he wore and the language he spoke. A great

book is a possession for all time, because a writer of the first rank is the contemporary of every generation; he is never outgrown, exhausted, or even old-fashioned, although the garments he wore may have been laid aside long ago.

In this permanent quality, unchanged by changes of taste and form, resides the secret of that charm which draws about the great poets men and women of each succeeding period, eager to listen to words which thrilled the world when it was young, and which have a new meaning for every new age. It is safe to say that Homer will speak to men as long as language survives, and that translation will follow translation to the end of time. What Robinson said of the Bible in one of the great moments of modern history may be said of the

greater works of literature: more light will always stream from them. Indeed, many of them will not be understood until they are read in the light of long periods of history; for as the great books are interpretations of life, so life in its historic revelation is one continuous commentary on the greater books.

This preponderance of the permanent over the accidental or temporary in books of this class is largely due to the unconscious element which plays so great a part in them: the element of universal experience, in which every man shares in the exact degree in which, in mind and heart, he approaches greatness. It is idle to attempt to separate arbitrarily in Shakespeare, for instance, those elements in the poet's work which were deliberately introduced from those

which went into it by the unconscious action of his whole nature; but no one can study the plays intelligently without becoming more and more clearly aware of those depths of life which moved in the poet before they moved in his work; which enlarged, enriched, and silently reorganised his view of life and his power of translating life out of individual into universal terms. It would be impossible, for instance, to write such a play as "The Tempest" by sheer force of intellect; in the creation of such a work there is involved, beyond literary skill, calculation, and deep study of the relation of thought to form, a ripeness of spirit, a clearness of insight, a richness of imagination, which are so much part of the very soul of the poet that he does not separate them in thought, and cannot con-

sciously balance, adjust, and employ them. They are quite beyond his immediate control, as they are beyond all attempts to imitate them.

Cleverness may learn all the forms and methods, but it is powerless to imitate greatness; it can simulate the conscious, dexterous side of greatness, but it cannot simulate the unconscious, vital side. The moment a man like Voltaire attempts to deal with such a character as Joan of Arc, his spiritual and artistic limitations become painfully apparent; of cleverness there is no lack, but of reverence, insight, depth of feeling, the affinity of the great imagination for the great nature or deed, there is no sign. The man is entirely and hopelessly incapacitated for the work by virtue of certain limitations in his own nature of which he is obviously in entire ignorance.

The conscious skill of Voltaire was delicate, subtle, full of vitality; but the unconscious side of his nature was essentially shallow, thin, largely undeveloped; and it is the preponderance of the unconscious over the conscious in a man's life which makes him great in himself and equips him for work of the highest quality. No man can put his skill to the highest use and give his knowledge the final touch of individuality until both are so entirely incorporated in his personality that they have become part of himself.

This deepest and most vital of all the processes of self-education and self-unfolding, which is brought to such perfection in men of the highest creative power, is the fundamental process of culture, — the chief method which every man uses, consciously or unconsciously, who brings his nature

to complete ripeness of quality and power. The absorption of vital experience and knowledge which went on in Shakespeare enlarged and clarified his vision and insight to such a degree that both became not only searching, but veracious in a rare degree; life was opened to him on many sides by the expansion first accomplished in himself. This is saying again what has been said so many times, but cannot be said too often, — that, in order to give one's work a touch of greatness, a man must first have a touch of greatness in his own nature. But greatness is not an irresponsible and undirected growth; it is as definitely conditioned on certain obediences to intellectual discipline and spiritual law as is any kind of lesser skill conditioned on practice and work. One of these conditions

is the development of the power to turn conscious processes of observation, emotion, and skill into unconscious processes; to enrich the nature below the surface, so to speak; to make the soil productive by making it deep and rich. Men of mere skill always stop short of this final process of self-development, and always stop short of those final achievements which sum up and express all that has been known or felt about a subject and give it permanent form; men of essential greatness take this last step in that higher education which makes one master of the force of his personality, and give his words and works universal range and perennial interest.

Now, this is the deepest quality in the books of life, which a student may not only enjoy to the full, but

may also absorb and make his own. When Alfred de Musset, in an oft-repeated phrase, said that it takes a great deal of life to make a little art, he was not only affirming the reality of this process of passing experience through consciousness into the unconscious side of a man's nature, but he was also hinting at one of the greatest resources of pleasure and growth. For time and life continually enrich the man who has learned the secret of turning experience and observation into knowledge and power. It is a secret in the sense in which every vital process is a secret; but it is not a trick, a skill, or a method which may be communicated in a formula. Mrs. Ward describes a character in one of her stories as having passed through a great culture into a great simplicity of nature; in

other words, culture had wrought its perfect work, and the man had passed through wide and intensely self-conscious activity into the repose and simplicity of self-unconsciousness; his knowledge had become so completely a part of himself that he had ceased to be conscious of it as a thing distinct from himself. There is no easy road to this last height in the long and painful process of education; and time is an essential element in the process, because it is a matter of growth.

There are, it is true, a few men and women who seem born with this power of living in the heart of things and possessing them in the imagination without having gone through the long and painful stages of preparatory education; but genius is not only inexplicable, it is also so rare that for the immense majority of men any ef-

fort to comprehend it must be purely academic. It is enough to know that if we are in any degree to share with men and women of genius the faculty of vision, insight, and creative energy, we must master the conditions which favor the development of those supreme gifts. There is laid, therefore, upon the student who wishes to get the vital quality of literature the necessity of repeating, by deliberate and intelligent design, the process which in so many of the masters of the arts has been, apparently, accomplished instinctively. To make observation, study, and experience part of one's spiritual and intellectual capital, it is, in the first place, necessary to saturate one's self with that which one is studying; to possess it by constant familiarity; to let the imagination play upon it; to meditate upon it.

And it is necessary, in the second place, to make this practice habitual; when it becomes habitual, it will become largely unconscious: one does it by instinct rather than by deliberation. This process is illustrated in every successful attempt to master any art. In the art of speaking, for instance, the beginner is hampered by an embarrassing consciousness of his hands, feet, speech; he cannot forget himself and surrender himself to his thought or his emotion; he dare not trust himself. He must, therefore, train himself through mind, voice, and body; he must submit to constant and long-sustained practice, thinking out point by point what he shall say and how he shall say it. This process is, at the start, partly mechanical; in the nature of things it must be entirely within the view and

control of a vigilant consciousness. But as the training progresses, the element of self-consciousness steadily diminishes, until, in great moments, the true orator, become one harmonious instrument of expression, surrenders himself to his theme, and his personality shines clear and luminous through speech, articulation, and gesture. The unconscious nature of the man subordinates his skill wholly to its own uses. In like manner, in every kind of self-expression, the student who puts imagination, vitality, and sincerity into the work of preliminary education, comes at last to full command of himself, and gives complete expression to that which is deepest and most individual in him. Time, discipline, study, and thought enrich every nature which is receptive and responsive.

Chapter XIX.

The Teaching of Tragedy.

NO characters appeal more powerfully to the imagination than those impressive figures about whom the literature of tragedy moves, — figures associated with the greatest passions and the most appalling sorrows. The well-balanced man, who rises step by step through discipline and work to the highest place of influence and power, is applauded and admired; but the heart of the world goes out to those who, like Œdipus, are overmatched by a fate which pursues with relentless step, or,

like Hamlet, are overweighted with tasks too heavy or too terrible for them. Agamemnon, Œdipus, Orestes, Hamlet, Lear, Père Goriot, are supreme figures in that world of the imagination in which the poets have endeavoured both to reflect and to interpret the world as men see it and act in it.

The essence of tragedy is the collision between the individual will, impulse, or action, and society in some form of its organisation, or those unwritten laws of life which we call the laws of God. The tragic character is always a lawbreaker, but not always a criminal; he is, indeed, often the servant of a new idea which sets him, as in the case of Giordano Bruno, in opposition to an established order of knowledge; he is sometimes, as in the case of Socrates, a teacher of

truths which make him a menace to lower conceptions of citizenship and narrower ideas of personal life; or he is, as in the case of Othello and Paolo, the victim of passions which overpower the will and throw the whole life out of relation to its moral and social environment. The interest with which the tragic character is always invested is due not only to the exceptional experience in which the tragic situation always culminates, but also to the self-surrender which precedes the penalty and the expiation.

There is a fallacy at the bottom of the admiration we feel when a rich nature throws restraint of any kind to the winds and gives itself up wholly to some impulse or passion, — the fallacy of supposing that by a violent break with existing conditions

freedom can be secured; for the world loves freedom, even when it is too slothful or too cowardly to pay the price which it exacts. That admiration arises, however, from a sound instinct, — the instinct which makes us love both power and self-sacrifice, even when the first is ill-directed and the second wasted. The vast majority of men are content to do their work quietly and in obscurity, with no disclosure of originality, freshness, or force; they obey law, conform to custom, respect the conventionalities of their age; they appear to be lacking in representative quality; they are, apparently, the faithful and uninteresting drudges of society. There are, it is true, a host of commonplace persons, in every generation, who perform uninteresting tasks in a mechanical spirit; but it

must not be inferred that a man is either craven or cowardly because he does not break from the circle in which he finds himself and make a bold and picturesque rush for freedom; it may be that freedom is to be won for him in the silent and faithful doing of the work which lies next him; it is certain that the highest power and the noblest freedom are secured, not by the submission which fears to fight, but by that which accepts the discipline for the sake of the mastery which is conditioned upon it.

There are, however, conditions which no man can control, and which are in their nature essentially tragic; and men and women who are involved in these conditions cannot elude a fate for which they are not responsible and from which they can-

not escape. This was true of many of the greatest characters in classical tragedy, and it is true also of many of the characters in modern tragedy. The world looks with bated breath on a struggle of the noblest heroism, in which men and women, matched against overwhelming social forces, bear their part with sublime and unfaltering courage, and by the completeness of their self-surrender assert their sovereignty even in the hour when disaster seems to crush and destroy them. To these striking figures, isolated by the greatness of their fate, the heart of the world has always gone out as to the noblest of its children. Solitary in the possession of some new conception of duty or of truth, separated from the mass of their fellows by that lack of sympathy which springs from im-

perfect comprehension of higher aims or deeper insight, these sublime strugglers against ignorance, prejudice, caste, and power, become the heroes and martyrs of the race; they announce the advent of new conceptions of social order and individual rights; they incarnate the imperishable soul of humanity in its long and terrible endeavour to bring the institutions and the ideas of men into harmony with a higher order of life.

The tragic element has, therefore, many aspects, — sometimes lawless and destructive, sometimes self-sacrificing and instructive; but its illustration in literature in any form is not only profoundly interesting, but profoundly instructive as well. In no other literary form is the stuff of which life is made wrought into such

commanding figures; in no other form are the deeper possibilities of life brought into such clear view; in no other form are the fundamental laws of life disclosed in a light at once so searching and so beautiful in its revealing power. If all the histories were lost and all the ethical discussions forgotten, the moral quality of life and the tremendous significance of character would find adequate illustration in the great tragedies. They lay bare the very heart of man under all historic conditions; they make us aware of the range of his experiences; they uncover the depths by which he is surrounded. They enable us to see, in lightning flashes, the undiscovered territory which incloses the little island on which we live; they light up the mysterious background of invisible forces against

which we play our parts and work out our destiny.

To the student of literature, who strives not only to enjoy but to comprehend, tragedy brings all the materials for a deep and genuine education. Instead of a philosophical or ethical statement of principles, it offers living illustration of ethical law as revealed in the greatest deeds and the most heroic experiences; it discloses the secret of the age which created it, — for in no other literary form are the fundamental conceptions of a period so deeply involved or so clearly set forth. The very springs of Greek character are uncovered in the Greek tragedies; and the tremendous forces liberated by the Renaissance are nowhere else so strikingly brought to light as in that group of tragedies which were produced in so many

countries, by so many men, at the close of that momentous epoch. When literature runs mainly to the tragic form, it may be assumed that the spiritual force of the race has expressed itself afresh, and that a race, or a group of races, has passed through one of those searching experiences which bring men again face to face with the facts of life; for the production of tragedy involves thought of such depth, insight of such clearness, and imaginative power of such quality and range that it is possible, on a great scale, only when the springs of passion and action have been profoundly stirred. The appearance of tragedy marks, therefore, those moments when men manifest, without calculation or restraint, all the power that is in them; and into no other literary form is the vital force poured

so lavishly. It is the instinctive recognition of this unveiling of the soul of man which gives the tragedy such impressiveness even when it is haltingly represented on the stage, and which subdues the imagination to its mood when the solitary reader comes under its spell. The life of the race is sacred in those great passages which record its sufferings; and nothing makes us so aware of our unity with our kind in all times and under all circumstances as the community of suffering in which, actively or passively, all men share.

In the tragedy the student of literature is brought into the most intimate relation with his race in those moments when its deepest experiences are laid bare; he enters into its life when that life is passing through its most momentous passages; he is pres-

ent in those hidden places where it confesses its highest hopes, reveals its most terrible passions, suffers its most appalling punishments, and passes on, through anguish and sacrifice, to its new day of thought and achievement.

Chapter XX.

The Culture Element in Fiction.

ONE of the chief elements in fiction which make for culture is, primarily, its disclosure of the elementary types of character and experience. A single illustration of this quality will suggest its presence in all novels of the first rank and its universal interest and importance. The aspirations, dreams, devotions, and sacrifices of men are as real as their response to self-interest or their tendency to the conventional and the commonplace; and they are, in the long run, a great deal more influential. They have wider play; they are more compelling; and they are of the very highest significance, be-

cause they spring out of that which is deepest and most distinctive in human nature. A host of men never give these higher impulses, these spiritual aptitudes and possibilities, full play; but they are in all men, and all men recognise them and crave an expression of them. Nothing is truer, on the lowest and most practical plane, than the old declaration that men do not live by bread alone; they sometimes exist on bread, because nothing better is to be had at the moment; but they live only in the full and free play of all their activities, in the complete expression not only of what is most pressing in interest and importance at a given time, but of that which is potential and possible at all times.

The novel of romance and adventure has had a long history, and the elements of which it is compounded

are recognisable long before they took the form of fiction. Two figures appear and reappear in the mythology of every poetic people, — the hero and the wanderer; the man who achieves and the man who experiences; the man who masters life by superiority of soul or body, and the man who masters it by completeness of knowledge. It is interesting and pathetic to find how universally these two figures held the attention and stirred the hearts of primitive men; how infinitely varied are their tasks, their perils, and their vicissitudes. They wear so many guises, they bear so many names, they travel so far and compass so much experience that it is impossible, in any interpretation of mythology, to escape the conviction that they were the dominant types in the thought of the myth-makers. And

these earliest story-makers were not idle dreamers, entertaining themselves by endless manufacture of imaginary incidents, conditions, and persons. They were, on the contrary, the observers, the students, the scientists of their period; their endeavour was not to create a fiction, but to explain the world and themselves. Their observation was imperfect, and they made ludicrous mistakes of fact because they lacked both knowledge and training; but they made free use of the creative faculty, and there is, consequently, a good deal more truth in their daring guesses than in many of those provisional explanations of nature and ourselves which have been based too exclusively on scrutiny of the obvious fact, and indifference to the fact, which is not less a fact because it is elusive.

The myth-makers endeavoured to

explain the world, but that was only one-half of their endeavour; they attempted also to explain themselves. They discovered the striking analogies between certain natural phenomena or processes and the phenomena and processes of their own nature; they discovered the tasks and wanderings of the sun, and they perceived the singular resemblance of these tasks and wanderings to the happenings of their own lives. So the hero and the wanderer became subjective as well as objective, and symbolised what was deepest and most universal in human nature and human experience, as well as what was most striking in the external world. When primitive men looked into their hearts and their experience, they found their deepest hopes, longings, and possibilities bound up and worked out in

two careers, — the career of the hero and the career of the wanderer.

These two figures became the commanding types of all the nobler mythologies, because they symbolised what was best, deepest, and most real in human nature and life. They represent the possible reach and the occasional achievement of the human soul; they stand for that which is potential as well as for that which is actual in human experience. Few men achieve or experience on a great scale; but these few are typical, and are, therefore, transcendent in interest. The average commonplace man fills great space in contemporary history, as in the history of all times, and his character and career are well worth the closest study and the finest art of the writer; but the average man, who never achieves greatly, and

to whom no striking or dramatic experience comes, has all the possibilities of action and suffering in his nature, and is profoundly interested in these more impressive aspects of life. Truth to fact is essential to all sound art, but absolute veracity involves the whole truth, — the truth of the exceptional as well as of the average experience; the truth of the imagination as well as of observation.

The hero and the wanderer are still, and always will be, the great human types; and they are, therefore, the types which will continue to dominate fiction; disappearing at times from the stage which they may have occupied too exclusively, but always reappearing in due season, — the hero in the novel of romance, the wanderer in the novel of adventure. These figures are as constant

in fiction as they were in mythology; from the days of the earliest Greek and Oriental stories to these days of Stevenson and Barrie, they have never lost their hold on the imagination of the race. When the sense of reality was feeble, these figures became fantastic, and even ridiculous; but this false art was the product of an unregulated, not of an illegitimate, exercise of the imagination; and while "Don Quixote" destroyed the old romance of chivalry, it left the instinct which produced that romance untouched. As the sense of reality becomes more exacting and more general, the action of the imagination is more carefully regulated; but it is not diminished, either in volume or in potency. Men have not lost the power of individual action because society has become so

highly developed, and the multiplication of the police has not materially reduced the tragic possibilities of life. There is more accurate and more extensive knowledge of environment than ever before in the history of the race, but temperament, impulse, and passion remain as powerful as they were in primitive men; and tragedy finds its materials in temperament, impulse, and passion, much more frequently than in objective conditions and circumstances.

The soul of man has passed through a great education, and has immensely profited by it; but its elemental qualities and forces remain unchanged. Two things men have always craved, — to come to close quarters with life, and to do something positive and substantial. Self-expression is the prime need of human

nature; it must know, act, and suffer by virtue of its deepest instincts. The greater and richer that nature, the deeper will be its need of seeing life on many sides, of sharing in many kinds of experience, of contending with multiform difficulties. To drink deeply of the cup of life, at whatever cost, appears to be the insatiable desire of the most richly endowed men and women; and with such natures the impulse is to seek, not to shun, experience. And that which to the elect men and women of the race is necessary and possible is not only comprehensible to those who cannot possess it: it is powerfully and permanently attractive. There is a spell in it which the dullest mortal does not wholly escape.[1]

[1] Reprinted in part, by permission, from the "Forum."

Chapter XXI.

Culture through Action.

IT is an interesting fact that the four men who have been accepted as the greatest writers who have yet appeared, used either the epic or the dramatic form. It can hardly have been accidental that Homer and Dante gave their greatest work the epic form, and that Shakespeare and Goethe were in their most fortunate moments dramatists. There must have been some reason in the nature of things for this choice of two literary forms which, differing widely in other respects, have this in common, that

they represent life in action. They are very largely objective; they portray events, conditions, and deeds which have passed beyond the stage of thought and have involved the thinker in the actual historical world of vital relationships and dramatic sequence. The lyric poet may sing, if it pleases him, like a bird in the recesses of a garden, far from the noise and dust of the highway and the clamour of men in the competitions of trade and work; but the epic or dramatic poet must find his theme and his inspiration in the stir and movement of men in social relations. He deals, not with the subjective, but with the objective man; with the man whose dreams are no longer visions of the imagination, but are becoming incorporate in some external order; whose passions

are no longer seething within him, but are working themselves out in vital consequences; whose thought is no longer purely speculative, but has begun to give form and shape to laws, habits, or institutions. It is the revelation of the human spirit in action which we find in the epic and the drama; the inward life working itself out in material and social relations; the soul of the man becoming, so to speak, externalised.

The epic, as illustrated in the "Iliad" and "Odyssey," deals with a main or central movement in Greek tradition; a series of events which, by reason of their nature and prominence, imbedded themselves in the memory of the Greek race. These events are described in narrative form, with episodes, incidents, and dialogues, which break the long

story and relax the strain of attention from time to time, without interrupting the progress of the narrative. There are heroes whose figures stand out in the long story with great distinctness, but we are interested much more in what they do than in what they are; for in the epic, character is subordinate to action. In the dramas of Shakespeare, on the other hand, while action is more constantly employed and is thrown into bolder relief, our deepest interest centres in the actors; the action is no longer the matter of first importance; it is significant mainly because it involves men and women not only in the chain of external consequences, but also in the order of spiritual sequences. We are deeply stirred by our perception of the intimate connection between

the possibilities which lie sleeping in the individual life, and the tragic events which are set in motion when those possibilities are realised in action. In both epic and drama men are seen, not in their subjective moods, but in their objective struggles; not in the detachment of the life of speculation and imagination, but in vital association and relation with society in its order and institutions. With many differences, both of spirit and form, the epic and the drama are at one in portraying men in that ultimate and decisive stage which determines individual character and gives history its direction and significance.

And it is from men in action that much of the deepest truth concerning life and character has come; indeed, it is not until we pass out of

the region of the speculative, the merely potential, that the word "character" takes on that tremendous meaning with which thousands of years of actual happenings have invested it. A purely ideal world — a world fashioned wholly apart from the realities which convey definite, concrete revelations of what is in us and in our world — would necessarily be an unmoral world. The relationships which bind men together and give human intercourse such depth and richness spring into being only when they are actually entered upon; they could never be understood or foreseen in a world of pure thought; nor would it be possible, in such a world, to realise that reaction of the deed upon the doer which creates character, nor that far-reaching influence of the deed upon

society, and the sequence of events which so often issues in tragedy and from which history derives its immense interest and meaning. A world which stopped short of realisation in action would not only lose the fathomless dramatic interest which inheres in human life, but it would part with all those moral implications of the integrity and persistence of the individual soul, its moral quality and its moral responsibility, which make man something different from the dust which whirls about him on the highway, or the stone over which he stumbles. This is precisely the character of those speculative systems which deny the reality of action and substitute the idea for the deed; such a world does more than suffocate the individual soul; it destroys the very

meaning of life by robbing it of moral order and meaning. The end of such a conception of the universe is necessarily annihilation, and its mood is necessarily despair.

"How can a man come to know himself?" asked Goethe. "Never by thinking, but by doing." Now, this knowledge of self in the large sense is precisely the knowledge which ripens and clarifies us, which gives us sanity, repose, and power. To know what is in humanity and what life means to humanity, we must study humanity in its active, not in its passive, moods; in the hours when it is doing, not thinking. Sooner or later all its thinking which has any reality in it passes on into action. The emotion, passion, thought, impulse, which never gets beyond the subjective stage, dies

before birth; and all those philosophies which urge abstinence from action would cut the plant of life at the root; they are, in the last analysis, pleas for suicide. Men really live only as they freely express themselves through thought, emotion, and action. They get at the deepest truth and enter into the deepest relationships only as they act. Inaction involves something more than the disease and decay of certain faculties; it involves the deformity of arrested development, and failure to enter into that larger world of truth which is open to those races alone which live a whole life. It is for this reason that the drama must always hold the first place among those forms which the art of literature has perfected; it is for this reason that Homer, Dante, Shake-

speare, and Goethe, consciously or unconsciously, chose those forms of expression which are specially adapted to represent and illustrate life in action; it is for this reason, among others, that these writers must always play so great a part in the work of educating the race. Culture is, above all things, real and vital; knowledge may deal with abstractions and unrelated bits of fact, but culture must always fasten upon those things which are significant in a spiritual order. It has to do with the knowledge which may become incorporate in a man's nature, and with that knowledge especially which has come to humanity through action. It is this deeper knowledge which holds a lighted torch aloft in the deepest recesses of the soul, or over those abysses of possi-

ble experience which open on all sides about every man, which is to be found in the pages of Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe, and of all those great artists who have seen men in those decisive and significant moments when they strike into the movement of history, or, through their deeds and sufferings, the order of life suddenly shines forth.

Chapter XXII.

The Interpretation of Idealism.

IDEALISM has so often been associated in recent years with vagueness of thought, slovenly construction, and a weak sentimentalism, that it has been discredited, even among those who have recognised the reality behind it and the great place it must hold in all rich and noble living. It is the misfortune of what is called Idealism, that, like other spiritual principles, it attracts those who mistake the longings of unintelligent discontent for aspiration, or the changing outlines of vapory fancies for the firm and consistent form and shape of real

conceptions deeply realised in the imagination. Idealism has suffered much at the hands of feeble practitioners who have substituted irrational dreams for those far-reaching visions and those penetrating insights which are characteristic of its true use and illustration in the arts. The height of the reaction so vigorously and impressively illustrated in a great group of modern realistic works is due largely to the weakness and extravagance of the idealistic movement. When sentiment is exchanged for its corrupting counterfeit, sentimentalism, and clear and definite thinking gives place to vague and elusive emotions and fancies, reaction is not only inevitable but wholesome; the instinct for sanity in men will always prevent them from becoming mere dreamers and star-gazers.

The true Idealist has his feet firmly planted on reality, and his idealism discloses itself not in a disposition to dream dreams and see visions, but in the largeness of a vision which sees realities in the totality of their relations and not merely in their obvious and superficial relations. It is a great mistake to discern in men nothing more substantial than that movement of hopes and longings which is so often mistaken for aspiration; it is equally a mistake to discern in men nothing more enduring and aspiring than the animal nature; either report, standing by itself, would be fundamentally untrue. Man is an animal; but he is an animal with a soul, and the sane view of him takes both body and soul into account. The defect of a good deal of current Realism lies in its lack of veracity; it is essentially

untrue, and it is, therefore, fundamentally unreal. The love of truth, the passion for the fact, the determination to follow life wherever life leads, are noble, artistic instincts, and have borne noble fruit; but what is often called Realism has suffered quite as much as Idealism from weak practitioners, and stands quite as much in need of rectification and restatement.

The essence of Idealism is the application of the imagination to realities; it is not a play of fancy, a golden vision arbitrarily projected upon the clouds and treated as if it had an objective existence. Goethe, who had such a vigorous hold upon the realities of existence, and who had also an artist's horror of mere abstractions, touched the heart of the matter when he defined the Ideal as the completion of the real. In this simple but

luminous statement he condensed the faith and practice not only of the greater artists of every age, but of the greater thinkers as well. In the order of life there can be no real break between things as they now exist and things as they will exist in the remotest future; the future cannot contradict the present, nor falsify it; for the future must be the realisation of the full possibilities of the present. The present is related to it as the seed is related to the flower and fruit in which its development culminates. There are vast changes of form and dimension between the seed and the tree hanging ripe with fruit, but there is no contradiction between the germ and its final unfolding.

A rigid Realism, however, sees in the seed nothing but its present hardness, littleness, ugliness; a true and

rational Idealism sees all these things, but it sees also not only appearances but potentialities; or, to recall another of Goethe's phrases, it sees the object whole.

To see life clearly and to see it whole is not only to see distinctly the obvious facts of life, but to see these facts in sequence and order; in other words, to explain and interpret them. The power to do this is one of the signs of a great imagination; and, other things being equal, the rank of a work of art may, in the last analysis, be determined by the clearness and veracity with which explanation and interpretation are suggested. Homer is, for this reason, the foremost writer of the Greek race. He is wholly free from any purpose to give ethical instruction; he is absolutely delivered from the temptation to didacticism;

and yet he reveals to us the secret of the temperament and genius of his race. And he does this because he sees in his race the potentialities of the seed; the vitality, beauty, fragrance, and growth which lie enfolded in its tiny and unpromising substance. If the reality of a thing is not so much its appearance as the totality of that which is to issue out of it, then nothing can be truly seen without the use of the imagination. All that the Idealist asks is that life shall be seen not only with his eyes but with his imagination. His descriptions are accurate, but they are also vital; they give us the thing not only as it looked standing by itself, but as it appeared in the complete life of which it was a part; he makes us see the physical side of the fact with great distinctness, but he makes

us see its spiritual side as well. As a result, there is left in our minds by the intelligent reading of Homer a clear impression of the spiritual, political, and social aptitudes and characteristics of the Greek people of his age, — an impression which no exact report of mere appearances could have conveyed; an impression which is due to the constant play of the poet's imagination upon the facts with which he is dealing.

This is true Idealism; but it is also true Realism. It is not only the fact, but the truth. The fact may be observed, but the truth must be discerned by insight, — it is not within the range of mere observation; and it is this insight, this discernment of realities in their relation to the whole order of things, which characterises true Idealism, and which

makes all the greater writers Idealists in the fundamental if not in the technical sense. Tolstoi has often been called a Realist by those who are eager to label everything and everybody succinctly; but Tolstoi is one of the representative Idealists of his time, and his "Master and Man" is one of the most touching and sincere bits of true Idealism which has been given the world for many a day.

There is nothing which needs such constant reinforcement as this faculty of seeing things in their totality; for we are largely at the mercy of the hour unless we invoke the aid of the imagination to set the appearances of the moment in their large relations. To the man who sees things as they rush like a stream before him, there is no order, progression, or intelligent movement in human affairs; but to

the student who brings to the study of current events wide and deep knowledge of the great historic movements, these apparently unrelated phenomena disclose the most intimate inter-relations and connections. The most despairing pessimism would be born in the heart of the man who should be fated to see to-day apart from yesterday and to-morrow; a rational and inspiring hope may be born in the soul of the man who sees the day as part of the year and the year as part of the century. The great writers are a refuge from the point of view of the moment, because they set the events of life in a fundamental order, and make us aware of the finer potentialities of our race. They are Idealists in the breadth of their vision and the nobility of the interpretation of events which they offer us.

Chapter XXIII.

The Vision of Perfection.

THESE writers are also, by virtue of the faculty of discerning the interior relations of appearances and events, the expositors of that ultimate Idealism which not only discovers the possibility of the whole in the parts, of the perfect in the imperfect, but which discovers the whole, the complete and the perfect, and brings each before us in some noble form. The reality of the Ideal as Plato saw it is by no means universally accepted as a philosophical conclusion, but all high-minded men and women accept it as a rule of life. Idealism is wrought into

the very fibre of the race, and is as indestructible as the imagination in which it has its roots. Deep in the heart of humanity lies the unshakable faith in its essential divinity, and in the reality of its highest hopes of development and attainment. The failure of noble schemes, the decline of enthusiasms, the fading of visions and dreams which seemed to have the luminous constancy of fixed stars, breed temporary depressions and passing moods of scepticism and despair; but the spiritual vitality of the race always reasserts itself, and faith returns after every disaster or disillusion.

Indeed, as the race grows older and masters more and more a knowledge of its conditions, the impression of the essential greatness of the experience we call life deepens in the finer spirits. It becomes clear that the

end towards which the hopes of the world have always moved is farther off than it seemed to the earlier generations; that the process of spiritual and social evolution is longer and more painful; that the universe is vaster and more wonderful than the vision of it which formed in the imagination of thinkers and poets; in a word, that the education which is being imparted to humanity by the very structure of the conditions under which it lives grows more severe, prolonged, and exacting as its methods and processes become more clear. The broadening of the field of observation has steadily deepened the impression of the magnitude and majesty of the physical order by which men are surrounded; and the fuller knowledge of what is in human experience has steadily deepened the impression

of the almost tragic greatness of the lot of men. The disappointments of the race have been largely due to its inadequate conception of its own possibilities; its disillusions have been like the fading of the mirage which simulates against the near horizon that which lies long leagues away. These disappointments and disillusions, as Browning saw clearly, are essential parts of an education which leads the race step by step from smaller to larger ideas, from nearer and easier to more remote and difficult attainments.

The disappointment which comes with the completion of every piece of work well and wisely done does not arise from the futility of the work, as the pessimists tell us, but from its inadequacy to express entirely the thought and force of the man who

has striven to express himself completely in a material which, however masterfully used, can never give its ultimate form to a spiritual conception. It is not an evidence of failure, but a prophecy of greater achievement. A world in which the work was as great as the worker, the piece of art as the artist, would be a finished world in more senses than one; a world in which all work is inadequate to contain the energy of the worker, all art insufficient to express the soul of the artist, is necessarily a prophetic world, bearing witness to the presence of a creative force in workers and artists immeasurably beyond the capacity of any perishable material to receive or to preserve.

A rational Idealism is, therefore, not only indestructible in a race which does not violate the laws of life, but

is instilled into the higher order of minds by the order of life as revealed by science, history, and the arts. And this idealistic tendency is not only the poetic temper; it is the hope and safeguard of society. The real perils of the race are not material; they are always spiritual; and no peril could be greater than the loss of faith and hope in the possibility of attaining the best things. If men are ever bereft of their instinctive or rational conviction that they have the power ultimately to bring institutions of all kinds into harmony with their higher conceptions, they will sink into the lethargy of despair or the slough of sensualism. The belief in the reality of the Ideal in personal and social life is not only the joy and inspiration of the poet and thinker; it is also the salvation of the race. It is imperish-

able, because it is the product of the play of the imagination on the realities of life; and until the imagination perishes, the vision of the ultimate perfection will form and reform in the heart of every generation. It is the inspiration of every art, the end of every noble occupation, the secret hope of every fine character.

Idealism in this sense, not as the product of an easy and ignorant optimism turning away from the facts of life, but as the product of a large and spiritual dealing with those facts, is the very soul, not only of noble living, but of those noble expressions of life which the greater writers have given us. They disclose wide diversity of gifts, but they have this in common, — that, in discovering to us the spiritual order of the facts of life, they disclose also those ideal figures which the race

accepts as embodiments of its secrets, hopes, and aims. It is a significant fact that, in portraying the Greek of his time, Homer has given us also the ideal Greek and the Greek ideals. His insight went to the soul of the persons he described, and he struck into that spiritual order in which the ideal is not only a reality, but, in a sense, the only reality.

Cervantes, in the very act of destroying a false Idealism, conventionally conceived and treated, made one of the most beautiful revelations of a true Idealism which the world has yet received. Shakespeare's presentation of the facts of life is, on the whole, the most comprehensive and impressive which has yet been made; in the disclosure of tragic elements it is unsurpassed; and yet what a host of ideal figures move through the plays

and invest them with a light beyond the glow of art! In the Forest of Arden and on Prospero's Island there live, beyond the touch of time and the vicissitudes of fate, those gracious and beautiful spirits in whom the race sees its noblest hopes come true, its instinctive faith in itself justified. These spirits are not airy nothings, woven of the unsubstantial gossamer of which dreams are made; they are born of a deep insight into the possibilities of the soul, and a rational faith in their reality. Prospero is as real as Trinculo, and Rosalind as true as Cressida. These ideal persons are not necessarily fortunate in their surroundings or happy in their lot; they are simply perfect in their development of a type. They are not abnormal beings, rising above normal conditions; they are normal beings,

rising above abnormal conditions. They stand for wholeness amid fragments, for perfection amid imperfection; but the very imperfection and fragmentariness by which they are surrounded predicts their coming and affirms their reality.

In the rounded and developed nature there must be a deep vein of the Idealism which grows out of the vision of things in their large relations — out of a view of men ample enough to discern not only what they are at this stage of development, but what they may become when development has been completed. Nothing is more essential than the courage, the joy, and the insight which grow out of such an Idealism, and no spiritual possession is more easily lost. The spiritual depression of a reactionary period, the routine of work, the im-

mersion in the stream of events, the decline of moral energy, conspire to blight this noble use of the imagination, and to chill the faith which makes creative living and working possible. The familiar companionship of the great Idealists is one of the greatest resources against the paralysis of this faith and the decay of this faculty.

Chapter XXIV.

Retrospect.

THE books of four great writers have been used almost exclusively by way of illustration throughout this discussion of the relation of books to culture. This limited selection may have seemed at times too narrow and rigid; it may have conveyed an impression of insensibility to the vast range and the great variety of literary forms and products, and of indifference to contemporary writing. It needs to be said, therefore, that the constant reference to Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe has been made for the sake of clearness and

force of illustration, and not, in any sense, as applying an exclusive principle of selection. The books of life are to be found in every language, and are the product of almost every age; and no one attains genuine culture who does not, through them, make himself familiar with the life of each successive generation. To be ignorant of the thought and art of one's time involves a narrowness of intelligence which is inconsistent with the maturity of taste and ripeness of nature which have been emphasised in these chapters as the highest and finest fruits of culture. The more generous a man's culture becomes, the more catholic becomes his taste and the keener his insight. The man of highest intelligence will be the first to recognise the fresh touch, the new point of view, the broader thought. He will bring

to the books of his own time not only a trained instinct for sound work, but a deep sympathy with the latest effort of the human spirit to express itself in new forms. So deep and real will be his feeling for life that he will be eager to understand and possess every fresh manifestation of that life. However novel and unconventional the new form may be, it will not make its appeal to him in vain.

It remains true, however, that literature is a universal art, expressive and interpretative of the spirit of humanity, and that no man can make full acquaintance with that spirit who fails to make companionship with its greatest masters and interpreters. The appeal of contemporary books is so constant and urgent that it stands in small need of emphasis; but the claims of the rich and splendid literature of

the past are often slighted or ignored. The supreme masters of an art ought to be the objects of constant study and thought; there is more of life, truth, and beauty in them than in their fellow-artists of narrower range of experience and artistic achievement. For this reason these greatest interpreters of the human spirit are in no sense exclusively of the past; they are of the present and the future. To know them is not only to know the particular periods in which they wrote, but to know our own period in the deepest sense. No man can better prepare himself to enter into the formative life of his time than by thoroughly familiarising himself with the greatest books of the past; for in these are revealed, not the secrets of past forms of life, but the secrets of that spirit whose historic life is one

unbroken revelation of its nature and destiny. It is, therefore, no disparagement of the great company of writers who have been the secretaries of the race in all ages to fasten attention upon the claims of the four men of genius whom the world has accepted as the supreme masters of the art of literature, and to point out again the immense importance of their works in the educational life of the individual and of society.

It cannot be said too often that literature is the product of the continuous spiritual activity of the race; that it cannot be arbitrarily divided into periods save for mere convenience of arrangement; and that it is impossible to understand and value its latest products unless one is able to find their place and discern their value in the order of a spiritual development. To

secure an adequate impression of this highest expression of the human spirit one must keep in view the work of the past quite as definitely as the work of the present; in such a broad survey there is a constant deliverance from the rashness of contemporary judgments, and from that narrowness of feeling which limits one's vital contact with the life of the race to the products of a single brief period.

In any attempt to indicate the fundamental significance of the art of literature in the educational development of the individual and of society there must also be a certain repetition of idea and of illustration. This limitation, if it be a limitation, is inherent in the very nature of the undertaking. Literature is, for purposes of comment and exposition, practically inexhaustible; its themes are as varied and as

numerous as the objects upon which the mind can fasten and about which the imagination can play. But while its forms and products are almost without number, this magnificent growth has, in the last analysis, a single root, and in these brief chapters the endeavour has been made, very inadequately, to bring the mind to this deep and hidden unity of life and art. Information, instruction, delight, flow in a thousand rivulets from as many books, but there is a spring of life which feeds all these separate streams. From that unseen source flows the vitality which has given power and freshness to a host of noble works; from that source vitality also flows into every mind open to its incoming. A rich intellectual life is characterised not so much by profusion of ideas as by the appli-

cation of a few formative ideas to life; not so much by multiplicity of detached thoughts as by the habit of thinking. The genius of Carlyle is evidenced not by prodigal growth of ideas, but by an impressive interpretation of life through the application to all its phenomena of a few ideas of great depth and range. And this is true of all the great writers who have given us fresh views of life from some central and commanding height rather than a succession of glimpses or outlooks from a great number of points. The closer the approach to the central force behind any course of development, the fewer in number are the elements involved. The rootage of literature in the spiritual nature and experience of the race is the fundamental fact not only in the history of this rich and splendid art, but in its

relation to culture. From this rootage flows the vitality which imparts immortality to its noblest products, and which supplies an educational element unrivalled in its enriching and enlarging quality.



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